Itsuka Tenma no Kuro Usagi Volume 1

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These are the novel illustrations that were included in volume 1

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いつか天魔の黒ウサギ1
900秒の放課後

鏡貴也

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富士見書房

いつか天魔の黒ウサギ1
900秒の放課後

「私の毒を、あなたに入れる。決して離れられなくなるように」

そうして僕の物語は、始まった——はずだったのに。

宮阪高校1年、鉄大兎。自分は人生の主役で、頑張れば報われるなんて幻想はもう信じていない。彼の毎日は平凡に消費される。

大兎は、忘れていた。〝彼女〟の笑顔。交わした〝約束〟。血肉に溶けた呪い。大切な記憶は、なぜ奪われたのか？

それでも失われたはずの想いの中で、〝彼女〟は微笑む。

『やっと死んでくれたね。この日をずっと待っていた——』

〝7回生きて君と出逢う〟学園リバース・ファンタジー、開幕!!

平凡に毎日が過ぎていくのは、幸せなことだと思うのに。
放課後は、仲間外れにされているような、気分になる。

——だって、馬鹿な俺は"約束"を忘れていたから。

いつか天魔の黒ウサギ

1 900秒の放課後

「あなたに選択権はないの」
《最古の魔術師》
サイトヒメア
SAITO HIMEA

「ほんとに脇役だなぁ……」
《犠者》鉄大兎・15分に7回
TAITO KUROGANE

「違う。俺は天才だ」
《生徒会長》紅月光
GEKKOU KURENAI

「9年後に兄さんを悪魔に喰わす」
《??????》紅日向
HINATA KURENAI

「あたしにキスしろっつってんの！
じゃないと死ぬぞ!!」
《アンドウのミライ》安藤美雷
MIRAI ANDOU

俺のひどいわがままに、
しかし、彼女はこちらを見つめる。

「私も一緒に戦う。
――二人なら、いけるかもしれない」

そう言って、
嬉しそうな、泣きそうな顔でこちらを見つめる。

Prologue - The Tenma[1] Yet Unsung

That was probably a memory of the distant past.

At that time, undoubtedly,

"Are you going to suck my blood?"

I asked.

On hearing that, she replied.

"I'm not going to suck it. Your blood that is."

Extremely.

She was an extremely beautiful young girl.

With long lavender colored hair, and fair, white skin.

With mischievous deep crimson eyes giving a feeling of ebullience.

It was as if she was a fairy that came out of a fantasy; that was the atmosphere given off by the young girl.

"Then, what are you going to do?"

I asked and she answered.

"I'm going to inject poison into you."

"Poison?"

"That's right. Poison."

She acknowledged with a heart-throbbing smile in a bewitching manner unthinkable of a child.

"I'm going to inject my poison into you. A poison that will make you unable to leave me."

Her alluring pink lips parted.

Her eyes dancing mischievously, her lips closed in on the nape of my neck.

"It'll be okay. It's not going to be painful."

Even though she said that, it was but a lie. I felt a sharp jab into the back of my neck,

"Ouch."

I uttered.

While biting into the back of my neck, she laughed lightly in delight. As she laughed, her breath fell onto my neck, and I stiffened my body.

"Here goes?"

She said and subsequently injected the poison.

I understood that.

The poison.

The **<<** ***Black Magic*** ***Poison*** [2] **>>** *spread into my body.*

And then, everything ended immediately.

She drew away from me, and as expected, with a delighted face, she looked intently at me.

"Alright, it's done ~. With this, you won't be able to leave me. Alive, or dead, forever and ever. Are you prepared for that?"

On hearing that, I replied.

"..... I can't be resigned to something like that."

"Aha. But, the curse has already been placed ~. That's why you are now my servant. My guard. My beloved. I love you, Taito."

I was told all of a sudden.

With my heart racing,

"Telling that to me out of the blue....."

"You don't have a choice."

"No way."

"Enough of that, tell me you love me. After that, the **<<** ***Black Magic Poison*** **>>** *will be completed. Or is it that..... you hate me?"*

She said that with a slightly unsettled face. Her eyebrows knitted with a tinge of loneliness, and she looked intently at me .

On seeing that, I,

"....."

I replied.

Since I didn't want to see such a face from her.

Always brimming with confidence, with an air of a bully, the willful her; I didn't want to see such a face from her.

That's why I replied.

"..... I don't hate you."

"You like me?"

"Yeah."

"Then tell me."

"....."

"Tell me now, Taito."

In response to that, I nodded.

"..... yeah. I also..... I also love you, Himea."

That was what I said.

I called her name.

In that instant.

I knew that anything and everything had changed.

I knew that the world, and the composition of my body, anything and everything had changed.

It had arrived.

The curse.

It had arrived.

The ***<< Black Magic Poison >>.***

On hearing that, she smiled happily.

Her beautiful pink lips parted, revealing a little of her small teeth.

I like looking at that smiling face.

I like looking at her smiling face.

That's why I smiled as well.

Gazing at her, I smiled.

And then once again,

"I like you, Himea."

As I said that.

My story began.

Chapter 1 - Chance Meeting

"Hey. Hey! It's about time to wake up, Taito. The homeroom has already long ended, you know?"

Such a voice rang out all of a sudden.

"H~n?"

Kurogane Taito[3] moaned softly. Following that, he half-opened his eyes.

As he did so, he could see a girl peering at his face.

With beautiful medium length hair framing a troubled looking but yet gentle, smiling face. A girl wearing a sailor uniform and pleated skirt with a checkered pattern .

Shigure Haruka.

She has been his neighbour since sixth grade, and on top of that, since entering Miyasaka High this spring, she is seated in the neighbouring seat in the same class; a childhood friend tied to him in an inseparable relationship by the words "neighbouring neighbouring neighbouring".

Taito looked up at that Haruka,

"..... what's up?"

On hearing that, her cute fine eyebrows knitted slightly, and she put her hands on her hips with a slight hint of anger.

"Now ~, that's not what you should be saying ~. Taito-tteba, you had been sleeping since the fifth period right? Even sensei couldn't wake you up no matter how hard he tried."

"..... eh? Since the fifth period? Wait, what's the time now?"

"Twenty minutes past three."

"Woah? Isn't that already past homeroom?"

"Didn't I just tell you that?"

Haruka said with an increasingly amazed look. On seeing that, Taito,

"You're kidding right?"

Surprised, he sat his body up. Following that, he looked around his surroundings. By the way, the period during which he was sleeping should have been home economics class. During lunch break, he bought three croquette bread and stuffed it down with milk, triggering a small heartburn, and on top of that, the home economics sensei said,

"Alright, now, today, let's learn about matsuri sewing[4] ~"

Heck, how can matsuri sewing help me in my future?, he thought, subsequently, he remembered up till the point of feeling sleepy and sprawling himself on the desk.

But, still, to think that the sixth period of Japanese and homeroom just flew right by and ended.

"....."

To think that school had already ended by now.

"....."

However, as Taito looked up, the class was already almost half empty. Furthermore, a few students, with

brooms in their hands, were already starting to clean up, and on top of that, among them were a few girls looking at the Taito who had been sleeping all this while instead of bringing his desk to the back with a look of annoyance on their faces.

On seeing that, Taito,

"..... ah ~, eh ~, it's better for me to bring my desk to the back right?"

As he said that, the girls, with a look saying *Isn't that obvious*, nodded. With that, Taito hurriedly stood up, and as he brought his desk along, he said.

"..... hey Haruka, why didn't you wake me up?"

On hearing that, Haruka, with slightly puffed up cheeks,

"I've tried waking you up many times ~"

"Liar."

"I'm not lying."

"Then, why didn't I wake up?"

"How would I know about that? The thing is, even when our Japanese class's Yamada-sensei smacked your head and hollered at you, you didn't wake up at all, you know? There's no way I can do anything at all when you are sleeping like that."

Haruka said.

On hearing that, Taito opened his eyes widely.

Japanese teacher Yamada.

Counselor Yamada!

Violent iron fist Yamada!!

The shocking fact that he had went through Yamada's lesson without once waking up caused Taito to ask in a frightful voice.

"..... was Yamada angry?"

"He said he's going to kill you later."

"Seriously!"

As Taito was at a complete loss, for some reason, Haruka smiled.

"Kidding ~. Was a joke, a joke. Today, Yamada-sensei wasn't feeling well and was on sick leave ~. That's why the sixth period was a self-study period."

"..... I'm really going to kill you."

As Taito clenched his fists, Haruka, in response, brought both her hands before her, mimicking a karate pose, and said.

"Ha ha ha. Try me, Taito-kun."

"What, who are you?"

"My name is Jackie-san."

"No, that's why I'm asking who's that?"

Tilting her head to one side, Haruka replied,

"Ah-reh, isn't that the name of a kungfu guy?"

"Kungfu guy..... that's Jackie Chan right? Or are you referring to Jet Lee?"

"No idea."

"Don't mimic if you don't know."

After Taito sighed out in amazement, he looked around once more. The sweeping was done and the rearranging of the desks to their original positions had begun. The sunlight streaming in from the window was slanted, and very soon, the sky would start turning red.

The time now was twenty minutes to four. It seemed like Taito had really dozed off for over two hours since the start of the fifth period. He then started,

"Shit ~, I slept too much."

As Taito muttered, at that moment, all of a sudden, Haruka's finger came wiping on the side of Taito's mouth ,

"Woah? Huh? What are you doing?"

At his question, with a face saying *what are you so surprised about?*, she looked at him,

"Eh? Ah, there was drool on your face."

She said. And then once again, her finger came forth to wipe off the drool that had trickled out of his mouth during his slumber.

"..... no, no, wait. Erm, no, isn't this kind of bad?"

Taito stated as he looked around. Even though most of the students had already left, there were still a number of people looking towards them.

A group of three good girlfriends, with faces saying *eeehhhhhh?*, were looking at them.

A group of two bespectacled guys who always only talk about anime, with faces saying *eeehhhhhh?*, were looking at them.

And all other various people, with faces saying *eeehhhhhh* and *even though you are only in your first year of high school, aren't you guys quite the couple already* which was something Taito and Haruka, who are on good

terms, were often told, were looking intently at the pair with an incredulous expression.

And then Taito, frantically, *No, that's not it, you see? This is not what it looks like, it's just that we've been neighbours since young and are brought up like a pair of siblings and we're really definitely not in that kind of relationship, you see?*

That's what he wanted to say, but if he had said that, it would generate a response like *Yeah yeah, you guys are sure on good terms*, and even *It seems like two of you are already going to get married the next day*, or *It seems like the both of you have a secret child*, or *Now, at any rate, it seems like you guys are going ero ero everyday*, and spreading meaningless stuff, subsequently *Ok, please come to the staff room*; it would somehow turn into something like that, and for now, the Taito who had seen about four scenarios said.

"Eh, erm, Haruka, we aren't like that right? That's why, regarding that, can you refrain from doing that?"

On hearing that, with a bewildered expression, Haruka began,

"Uhn? *We aren't like that*, what do you mean by that?"

"No, figure it out already."

"Uhn?"

"Nn-ah ~, it's, no, well, forget it....."

After sighing softly at Haruka, who, like how she was in the old days, was excessively bad at realizing such things, Taito looked at her. Since they have been together all this while, though he was not too conscious of it, he had judged her to be pretty cute back then, and he now looked at that cute face. With large black eyes, and well trimmed --- in other words, it's evident that alot of effort had been put into it --- gorgeous hair.

Looking at that, Taito,

"....."

Isn't he lucky to have such a cute girl with a good personality by his side at times? He held that line of thought for just a while. On top of that, she is a bosom friend. Moreover if they were a healthy, sixteen year old,

tenth grader man and woman, to say that they have no interest in such matters would be a big lie that deserves having their tongues pulled out.

Perhaps.

Speaking of this possibility despite that it was not so, normally speaking, they might already be dating.

"....."

Taito just held that line of thought for just a while as he looked at her.

As he did that, Haruka looked at him in puzzlement.

"What's wrong, Taito. Making such a serious face."

She said. And then Taito.

"....."

He said.

"..... strange..... why don't I feel this way at all, I wonder?"

"As I just said, what are you talking about?"

"No, it's nothing..... what is this about hmm."

He muttered softly. And then, he thought back on a similar thing of the past.

When he was in junior high, miraculously, a first-year girl whom he thought to be cute had confessed to him, and it was so as well. For a one in thousand chance, for some reason, he had not accepted the girl's feelings and rejected her.

Was the reason behind his rejection and refusal to date that first-year girl due to him being in love with his childhood friend, Haruka, who was in another school, he wondered.

"....."

However, right now, he looked at the Haruka before him. He looked at the Haruka who is kind to him. He looked at the face of the kind, cute, smart girl with whom he was on very good terms.

The words that floated in his head were ---

<< Hey! You are my thing right? I won't forgive you if you cheat on me! >>

All of a sudden, a voice reverberated in his head in such a manner. On top of that, his head started hurting a little.

In response to that, Taito,

"....."

He was stunned.

The reason was because he knew the voice that had reverberated in his head.

That was the voice of the young girl who had appeared in his dream every now and then.

That was the voice of the young girl who had appeared every now and then in that embarrassing dream, a fantasy he had entered, a type of dream which he should not be seeing after starting high school without comebacks flying towards him from all directions.

That was the voice of the somewhat strange girl who had also appeared in the dream just now when he had dozed off.

In response to that,

"....."

Ah-reh, wait a minute, Taito thought.

Eh? Huh? In other words, is it that? I've actually fallen for the girl in my dreams and because of that, I've become a pathetic guy who can't accept the feelings of the girls in my reality.

Ehhhhhh? Are you kidding me? No, no, that can't be the case. I should be much more healthier than that. Even now, I kind of like Haruka ---

"....."

As he was thinking about such moronic things, all of a sudden, from within the classroom, *Kyaaaaaaaaa!*, the screams of girls could be heard.

On hearing that, Taito,

"Hn? What's that?"

He looked towards the direction where the screams came from.

Haruka as well,

"Uhn?"

In the instant she looked towards there.

The door of the classroom flew open. At the same time, a man came falling in.

"What? What?"

As he frantically stepped forward to protect Haruka, Taito looked at the man who came flying in.

"....."

As he did that, Taito realized that he knew that man. A pimpled-face man with a large build. It was a man by the name of Sakamaki, a third year guy known to mix around with a group of men with unseemly behaviour. It was rumored that recently, he had been extorting money from the freshmen.

This man just came flying in through the door of the classroom of year one class three. For one who had always acted in superiority and swaggered around, his face was now contorted in fear. With some blood flowing

from his mouth, it seemed like he was beaten by someone, and trembling, he glared at something outside of the classroom.

Taito, who was taking in this scene,

"..... what in the world happened?"

At the same time as he murmured that.

"..... excuse me for a bit."

Another man walked into the classroom.

In a flash, the expressions of the girls remaining in the classroom changed. And once again,

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaa "

Was heard.

Then, he looked at the man who had just entered the classroom.

He has pitch-black hair and as expected, in accordance of the rules of Miyasaka High, his hair length reached only to his neck till the black collar of his school uniform.

He has a pair cold eyes with no trace of any childishness on his handsome face. A famous person of Miyasaka High, he appeared while the girls were going *Kya --- kya ---*, much like the debuting of a manga character.

He was at the same age as Taito, sixteen. Despite the fact that he had only entered this very school just last month --- in April --- for some unknown reason, he was selected as the student council president; a mysterious man indeed.

Kurenai Gekkou --- that's the name of that man.

"Ge, Gekkou-sama, is there anything class three can do for you!?"

One of the girls shouted.

"I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I....."

Another of the girls, for some unknown reason, nervously shouted.

"I like you! I like Gekkou-sama very much!"

Another of the girls shouted.

At any rate, he was very popular with the girls. His popularity was so high that as a man, one would not even have the spirit and energy to be jealous of him.

Well, as far as the eyes can see, he is indeed good looking, and on top of that, he is like some kind of superman who excel exceptionally at both studies and sports, it seemed.

"....."

At that moment.

Taito, just for a bit.

"....."

He turned around for a bit. He looked at the Haruka who was diagonally behind him.

How does Haruka.

How does Haruka view him, he was somewhat bothered by that, and just for a bit, he took a glimpse in her direction.

As he did so.

"....."

For some reason, she was not looking at Gekkou. Instead, she was happily gazing at Taito.

And their eyes met.

Then, for some reason, her expression became somewhat mischievous as she began,

"Ah ~, Taito-tteba, you are jealous of the popular Kurenai-kun right?"

She said to him.

On hearing that, Taito shrugged his shoulders.

"Eh? Aahh ~. Well. If I say I'm not jealous, I'll be lying."

"Ah-rah, do you really want to become popular?"

On hearing that, Taito nodded honestly.

"Of course I want to become popular. But, I'm not that kind of superman, so it's impossible for me. Even for Haruka, if you want to go out with someone, it'd be someone like him right?"

As he said that, for some reason, Haruka grinned.

"Now now, is that really the case?"

"What's that about?"

Furthermore, as he said that, after emitting a *fufufu* intrepid laugh, she looked intently at him.

"Putting that aside, just now, just now, when Sakamaki-senpai came flying in, Taito-tteba, you came protecting me right?"

"Hna? Did I?"

"Yeah, you're slow up there. Well, it's fine."

For some reason, she was making a pretty happy face. Befuddled about what was going on, Taito looked at her with a perplexed face, but then, she has always been a baffling person.

That's why, for now, he faced forward.

To look in the direction of Gekkou and the fallen Sakamaki.

Gekkou appeared uninterested at the girls who were going *kya --- kya ---*, and after giving a cold glance, he said.

"Yoh, third year Sakamaki-kun, what in the world do you need from me?"

Speaking in a gentle tone, with a cold expression.

With that, Sakamaki glared at Gekkou,

"For a freshman, aren't you getting carried away!!"

His loud voice thundered, causing Taito who was just standing beside him to feel jittery.

However, as expected, Gekkou, who appeared unmoved, continued in a cold voice,

"So?"

"Just because you're a little strong, don't get too full of yourself, or you'll get a taste of real pain, that's what I'm saying! Do you have any idea how many pals I have!!"

"So?"

"Well, I'm talking about my gang in town....."

But Gekkou interrupted him.

"As I was saying, so?"

Instantly.

Just that line from him brought the classroom back to a state of silence.

As if that line had just struck everything in their surroundings, from a voice, expression, and piercing eyes that spoke of authority, with a strong will embedded within them.

Sakamaki seemed to be on the verge of crying,

"..... why, why aren't you trembling in fear? Do you think I'm exaggerating? I'm serious, you know? My pals from my gang will....."

But, completely ignoring those words, Gekkou started walking. He then stopped beside the fallen Sakamaki and squatted down, and grabbed his head,

"You know, Sakamaki-kun. I don't care much for your bullshit..... but the next time you stand in my way..... I'm going to kill you, ok?"

He said.

It wasn't a voice filled with anger or anything of that sort. It was merely a statement of a fact --- a highly convincing declaration, that's how it felt like.

This time round, Sakamaki's face contorted in fear.

"What the hell..... what the hell is this guy..... is he really a freshman....."

But he was interrupted.

"That's enough, quickly get out of my sight."

Gekkou said.

Following that, Sakamaki hurriedly got up.

"Rem, reme, remem."

But on top of that, Gekkou added,

"I won't remember anything about you."

He said.

On hearing that, unable to say anything more, Sakamaki could only leave.

That was the scene.

"....."

That Taito saw with amazement.

To carry such an attitude to a third year delinquent with friends in a gang. On top of that, he excels in both studies and sports, an almighty guy who is popular with the girls, and to round it off, the student council president.

"..... what kind of superman is he?"

He muttered and in response to that, Haruka smiled.

"He's really incredible, isn't he?"

"Yeah. Incredible indeed. Quite the opposite compared to me, who has a mundane ordinary life."

However, as Taito said that, Haruka turned towards him,

"Now, Taito isn't just an ordinary person."

"I'm ordinary."

"No, you aren't."

"Yes, I am."

This went on back and forth for a while, and Haruka smiled,

"Uhn. Well then, isn't it good to be ordinary? Leading a peaceful daily life, and be able to laugh normally, isn't that the best?"

She said.

On hearing that, Taito looked at Haruka. He looked at the Haruka who was looking at him cheerfully. *Ah, that might be so*, he thought.

With the smiling Haruka by his side, even though everyday was somewhat boring, to be able to live every single day in peace, it might be a blissful thing in fact, he

thought. The daily classes might be bothersome, but even so, it might not be a bad thing to be ordinary after all, he thought.

"....."

Following that, Taito looked in the direction of Gekkou once again. He looked in the direction of the Gekkou, who stood out and got involved with the third year delinquent because he wasn't ordinary, and had come into the classroom after sending someone flying.

A guy who sends the girls around him going *kya --- kya* ---, a same age guy in his sixteenth year who has an unbelievably calm expression unbefitting of his age, and on top of that he was good in both studies and sports.

He looked at him and thought.

Perhaps he is really a superman, but there isn't really that much to be envious about, I guess, he thought.

Since Gekkou would probably get assaulted by a gang tonight. After getting shamed in front of everyone, there's no way Sakamaki would give this a rest. That's why, tonight, Gekkou would definitely get attacked. And whether that superman could deal with them or not,

Taito wasn't sure about that, but in any case, compared to getting surrounded by a bunch of hooligans on their bikes, isn't it better to just live their lives quietly in peace, he thought.

Besides, if he had a girlfriend, she wouldn't come out of this unscathed. Say for example, if he were in Gekkou's shoes, and Haruka were his girlfriend, and then, the gang would go *Your damn boyfriend has pissed us off!* and attack her; just imagining that would make him go *Uwehhhh, nooo*; all in all, a worrisome situation.

That's why,

"..... yeah."

Taito said. And then, he looked at Haruka,

"Yeah. It might be better to have a peaceful life indeed.
"

He said.

On hearing that, Haruka smiled.

"You see?"

"You're right. It might be nice to be ordinary starting from tenth grade, but I sound like a stinking old man."

"Ahaha. Taito-jiichann ~"

As she said that, she lifted the bag hanging from the side of her own desk.

"Oh well, it's time for me to go."

"Huh? Club activities?"

"Yeah. Today, I have a meeting at the tennis club. Ah, Taito, will you wait for me until the meeting ends?"

In response,

"No way."

He replied.

Haruka smiled at that,

"Eh ~ you're cold hearted ~, let's go back together, c'mon."

"Nah. Today, I'm going back earlier to sleep."

"After sleeping that much, you still want to sleep ~?"

As she said that, Taito was suddenly assaulted by a wave of sleepiness and he yawned.

"..... ah ~, no. Somehow, at this place, I feel very sleepy everyday."

"You stayed up late again yesterday to watch TV, didn't you?"

On hearing that, Taito thought back on the time at which he went to bed.

At around ten in the night, he felt sleepy all of a sudden and fell onto the bed and subsequently fell asleep .

And he saw that dream again.

A strange dream which he had been seeing regularly these days.

A dream in which that young girl with lavender-colored hair and deep crimson eyes appeared.

"....."

At that moment, Taito noticed something that's a little strange. More important than the dream itself, when he thought back, he actually slept pretty early yesterday. But yet, he was extremely sleepy now. In fact, at this place everyday, he was slee...py, *ah-reh?* This seemed to be bad, wasn't it? For him to feel so sleepy, it's like he was struck with an illness or something?

As he thought about that, Taito frowned slightly. Well, at the very least, if he said *The truth is I slept very early yesterday* ~ or something along those lines to Haruka, she would go *'hhh but yet you still feel sleepy, did you catch a cold or something? Let's, let's go to the hospital! Hospital!* and make a fuss about it, so he said.

"..... the truth is I watched TV till four....."

"Now! Then hurry up, go back and sleep!"

She said, and following that she started packing the stationary spread out on his desk into his bag, and then pushed the bag to him.

"Alright, quickly go back and sleep! Ah, but, will you be able to make your way back yourself when you're so sleep-deprived? Let me go together....."

But, at that moment, Taito frantically,

"I can go back by myself! Don't treat me like a kid."

"But, in the past, Taito had fallen and rolled off the stairs because he didn't get enough sleep....."

"How long ago was that! Besides, are you sure you won't be late? Hasn't the meeting already started?"

As Taito said that, he pointed towards the clock above the blackboard,

"Eh?"

Haruka uttered. Following that, she looked at the clock ,

"Wah ~!?"

She said.

"Well then, I'm going off but Taito, make sure you be careful when you make your way back, okay?"

"Alright alright. The same goes to you as well, make sure you don't knock into something in your haste."

"I'll be fine..... kyaaaaaa."

Taito smiled wryly upon seeing Haruka almost bumping into someone as she headed out of the classroom.

And once again, he thought a little about his situation. He thought a little as he was looking at Haruka dashing out of the classroom.

It might really be a blissful thing to be ordinary, he thought.

Then, he gave a slap to his own right leg.

"....."

He gave a slap to the very leg in which he had torn a tendon on the back side of the leg once, and even after it had healed, a dull pain had remained.

And then he remembered.

He used to practice karate in grade school and junior high, and had achieved some good results, but just before a national tournament, he incurred an injury.

To continue practicing karate like before is no longer possible for you --- Taito recalled the face of the doctor who had told him that.

"....."

During that time.

During that time, he had never once thought that it was a good thing to be a regular guy.

He had always believed that he was the protagonist of his life.

He had believed, without any basis, that just by working hard to the best of his ability, he would be rewarded.

Not remaining ordinary, to be able to go higher, to be able to go further, that's what he thought as a child.

"....."

But yet, all the things he had worked hard for had vanished all of a sudden.

And from then on, Taito no longer knew what he could do.

He was in the end a loser, wasn't he? However hard he works, in the end, it would all turn to nothing, and as he thought about all those idiotic things, he lost motivation in everything.

And in an aimless manner, he chose to enroll into Miyasaka High based on its close proximity to his home. After he started high school, he still did not feel the motivation to do anything, and had passed everyday in mundaneness.

But yet, Haruka was beside him, always smiling at him .

Even after Taito had given up on karate, she was always beside him, *it's alright, it's alright*, she would smile at him.

On top of that, she enrolled in the same high school, and even today, she was beside him saying *it's alright, it's alright*.....

"..... ah ~, shit. I should get going as well."

Taito mumbled.

Well, that's the reason why there's no way he would want to become a superman who could deal with everything easily like Gekkou. Just like what Haruka had said, it's best just to be ordinary, he thought, but still, within that ordinariness, it would be nice if he had at least something which he could strive for.

"....."

While he was thinking about those things, he lifted up his bag. And looked up. As he did that, he saw Gekkou who he thought should have left the classroom by now, still standing in front of the blackboard for some reason.

Furthermore, he was looking at Taito.

With a piercing gaze, he looked intently at Taito as if he was glaring at him.

That superman isn't it? That Mr. Genius was looking at the Taito who was living his life in an ordinary manner without knowing what to strive for.

In response to that, while Taito was feeling somewhat flustered,

"..... so, eh? Gekkou..... no, that's not it, erm, what was it again..... ahh, Kurenai-kun. Erm, do you want something from me?"

As he asked, Gekkou then,

"....."

Said nothing. He merely looked straight towards Taito.

"..... ah, or am I misunderstanding something? There's no way that Kurenai-kun would need something from someone like me....."

But, he was interrupted by Gekkou.

"Are you Kurogane Taito?"

He called out Taito's name. On hearing that, Taito was a little surprised and looked in the direction of Gekkou.

"..... how is it that you know my name?"

No, well, since they were both freshmen, it's not really strange that he knew his name, but, Taito was in class three. Gekkou was in class nine. Class three was on the second floor of the school premises while class nine was on the third floor, and if there was nothing the classes need from each other, there wasn't really any chance of them coming into contact and seeing each other.

"..... have I actually met you somewhere before?"

As Taito asked, a thin smile floated on Gekkou's lips,

"I see. You are Kurogane Taito..... hah. That Kurogane Taito seems ordinary. Surprisingly laughable."

He said all of a sudden.

On hearing that, Taito,

"Aahh?"

He uttered. And then he scowled,

"What's that about? Though you don't have any right to run your mouth off in that manner towards someone you've just met?"

In the instant he said that! The surrounding girls,

"Wait, wait Kurogane-kun! How can you speak to Gekkou-sama in that manner!"

They were suddenly making a fuss, and in response to that, Taito turned just a little meek. *To have the girls as your allies, how despicable*, he thought.

Haruka, come back me up a little ~, he thought.

Well, whatever.

Ignoring the noisy girls, Taito said.

"Who the hell are you? I don't know anything about the likes of you at all."

As he said that, Gekkou continued with a smile on his face,

"I don't know you as well."

"Then, why did you call my name?"

"But, I know the Kurogane Taito on that side."

He said something completely incomprehensible.

"Huuhhhhhh? I seriously don't get what you're talking about though?"

As he queried, Gekkou seemed to treat him like a fool and shrugged his shoulders.

"It's not like there's a need for you to know. If that's how the plot is, I'll just chase after it. One way or another ....."

In the midst of saying something incomprehensible, he stopped speaking suddenly. Following that, he turned on his heel and seemed about to leave the classroom,

"No wait a minute! What's that about? What's with that insinuating attitude? What in the world....."

But, completely ignoring Taito's words, Gekkou left the classroom. Following that, the girls went *wah --- kya* --- after him.

"Ignoring me!"

Taito hollered.

Of course, his voice didn't reach the Gekkou who had already left the classroom.

On top of that, there was not even a single girl there to turn around at his voice.

"....."

And besides, there was simply a difference in character roles between Mr Regular and Mr Genius, and *in the end, you're just a supporting character when compared to Kurenai Gekkou and a stand-off will only exemplify that clearly*.

The guys in the classroom, together with the remaining girls who didn't follow after Gekkou, were all directing a poisonous look towards Taito. Their gazes felt a little painful.

But, if he just leave the classroom without doing anything, it would feel kind of embarrassing and unsophisticated of him.

"....."

Then, all of a sudden, as if to break the uncomfortable silence, the two bespectacled guys who were happily

talking about the games in a corner of the classroom, Saitou-kun and Tanaka-kun, spoke up.

"Well, Kurogane-kun, I understand very well how you're feeling right now."

"Me too."

On hearing that, Taito looked at the both of them.

"..... wow ~, the two of you are actually good people, aren't you?"

He said.

Ahaha, Saitou and Tanaka laughed happily.

"Well well, why not loosen up and come join us here? I actually bought a new game."

He showed him the game on his portable game platform.

Following the onset of the conversation, the poisonous gazes directed from within the classroom subsided. As Taito breathed out a sigh of relief,

"Ohh, didn't that just came out recently?"

He said. Saitou nodded.

"Yup yup. Kurogane-kun, do you play a lot of games?"

"Yeah. In fact, I've been wanting to try that."

This time round, it was Tanaka who spoke.

"Alright, let's play together. This game can be played by four people, the more the merrier."

He invited Taito.

On hearing that, Taito considered joining them and wait for Haruka till she's done with her club meeting.

But.

"....."

But, at that moment, he yawned again. And then, a strong wave of drowsiness spread within his head, as if someone was saying *sleep*, *sleep*, *sleep* to him.

Following that. As if to stifle a yawn, Taito pushed the drowsiness back and said.

"Ah ~, I really want to, but I'm sorry. I stayed up late last night, and I'm so sleepy now that I could die, so I'm going back."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah. Sorry. But tomorrow, I'll definitely bring along my game platform. And we can fight it out."

"Alright ~ well then, see you, Kurogane."

Taito grinned at the dropping of the honorific.

"Ok. See you, Tanaka, Saitou."

Saying that, he waved. Then he slung his bag over his shoulder.

Following that, once again, Tanaka and Saitou gradually went back to their games, and resumed their conversation.

Ascertaining that, Taito left the classroom. There weren't many students in the corridor.

It was close to four now. Most of the students had either gone back or at their club activities.

Since Taito did not join any clubs, he felt somewhat left out from the various groups whenever school is over.

Since up till now, Taito had never once thought about working hard in his studies, in sports, getting into a good university and getting into some good job.

It was just that ever since he couldn't continue with his karate at which he worked so hard, still feeling overwhelmed, he had stopped picking himself up.

Not doing anything all this while.

"I really am a supporting character, it seems....."

Not working hard at anything, leading an ordinary, aimless life.

It was here at which he felt exasperated.

"On top of that, I'm so sleepy everyday, am I some kind of a sloth?"

He smiled as he said that.

But still, he was really abnormally sleepy just now, and feeling a little lightheaded, *this might be kind of bad*, he thought.

While he couldn't understand why he's feeling so sleepy, if he doesn't shape up and make his way back properly, it could be dangerous just as Haruka had feared.

"Uh ~ sleepy."

While desperately fighting to keep his half-shut eyes open, he made his way out of the school.

From the school to his home, it should take him about fifteen minutes by foot. The route to his home surfaced in his mind. Walking along the pavement, passing through the shopping district, his house would be somewhere along the residential district. Once he crossed the necessary distance, he would be home. Once he reached home, he would fly into his bed, he thought.

And sleep. Just as if he's falling into a mire, he would sleep. Just like a sloth, he would sleep. Without any goals , dreams, hope, he would sleep as a supporting character.

After awaking, the aimless, regular high school student life would, without a doubt, start again.

Having Haruka laughing by his side would add some color to his life, but, he didn't think that he had anything in him that would complement her.

As a person who had given up on moving forward, living an ordinary, unmotivated life.

That ---

Was what he thought till that point in time.

That was what Kurogane Taito thought till that point in time.

Once he woke up the next day, it would start just like today, attending the annoying classes, feeling envious of the special individuals striving for something and looking at them from a distance, an unsophisticated day.

He thought that that kind of day would continue for him.

But that didn't happen.

For some reason, it didn't happen.

Indeed, along his way back from school.

He waited for the light to turn at a cross junction leading into the shopping district.

The light turned.

From red to green.

Initially, Taito did not notice. All this while, he had been very sleepy and couldn't quite extend his awareness towards his surroundings. Only when a girl beside him

started walking, he had noticed that the light had turned green. And then Taito started walking as well.

It was then when Taito realized that he had seen the short girl just a few steps ahead of him before.

Her height was probably at 140 cm. Somewhat unsuitable for her height, she sprouts long hair tied up into a ponytail, and has a set of drooping eyes on her calm face.

Andou Mirai.[5]

That should have been her name. Belonging to the neighbouring class, she was said to be the cutest according to the guys. Well, although he had never talked to her before.

But, that girl he knew was walking before him.

Following that, from the side.

From the side next to her, a speeding truck that was approaching her came into Taito's view.

On seeing that, Taito's sleepiness flew away in an instant. For some unknown reason, the haziness in his

head flew away. And his eyes were on the truck. He was looking at the driver's seat of the truck. The truck driver was sleeping.

"..... oiy, you're kidding me right....."

He muttered, but that wasn't a joke.

Mirai did not notice the truck. She was walking casually as if she had not a care in the world.

Looking at that.

Taito was looking at that,

"Oiy!"

He yelled.

But, Mirai did not turn around.

"Wait!"

He yelled.

But Mirai did not turn around.

Seeing that.

"Aaahhhhhh, you're kidding me right, shit."

Taito started running. He started running with all his might. As he did so, he felt a pain in his thigh. A pain was felt in the thigh which had a tendon torn on the back of it, resulting him in being unable to continue practising karate, but he ignored that pain and continued running with all his might.

One step. Two steps. Three steps, with that, he caught up to Mirai.

He reached out for her back with his hand,

"Look out!"

And yelled.

"Eh?"

She uttered in surprise and started turning towards him, but there was no time for explanations. That's why,

"Sorry!"

As he yelled, Taito pushed towards her back.

"Uwah!?"

As she said that, just in the nick of time, Mirai was pushed by Taito with all his might, rolling forward. She fell onto the side of the pedestrain crossing outside of the area which would be occupied by the incoming truck.

As Taito breathed out a sigh of relief, he looked at the truck. As he did so.

"....."

As he did so, the truck was already right in front of him.

"Uwah, shit....."

That was the only thing he could utter.

Following that, he was sent flying with an unbelievable force.

In an instant, without knowing what had happened, he could only feel his body flying in the air.

Well, what had happened should actually be obvious to him. That's because that could only be one thing that could be causing this particular phenomenon.

Knocked by a large truck, he was sent flying meters away, dying.

In response to that.

"....."

Seriously, he thought somewhere in his mind.

Uwah, is this seriously happening, he thought somewhere in his mind.

My life is ending here? Are you kidding me? I haven't even done anything yet right? Losing something he had been striving at, he became a high school freshman without accomplishing anything. And he was hoping for something to change in high school, but nothing did.

It was boring everyday.

Since he was working hard at nothing, it was boring everyday.

Occasionally, *Ah ~ well, if this is it, maybe it's better to just die*, he would joke to himself. A loser, living life as a supporting character, perhaps it would be better for his life to just end, he would mildly consider that stupidly, but, never did he ever expect that his life would really end just like that.

Because he might be having some fun after all.

Besides, he had yet to say goodbye to his parents.

And he had made a promise to play games with Tanaka and Saitou tomorrow.

And above all else.

"....."

He thought that he really wanted to see Haruka's smile one more time.

Meh, if I had known this would happen, today, I would have waited at school for her and go back together.

"....."

At the instant he was thinking of that.

His body fell to the ground and there was cracking sound, a sound indicating that his spine had fractured in the worst possible manner. Following that, he felt the same thing in his legs. His arm bones were already broken, and he was in a grave situation.

But there was no pain. It was such a sudden thing that he couldn't feel a thing.

Everything seemed to happen in slow motion before his eyes. Taito recalled from somewhere, it was written that things appeared to happen slowly in the instant of death, and while recalling, he saw it.

He saw the scene where his crumpled body was sent flying afar, falling to the ground ---

Taito.

Rolling to the feet of Mirai, who was just beside the truck, the freshly severed head of Taito saw it.

In response to that.

"....."

Wha, ah-reh?

He thought.

Isn't this a little strange?

Taito thought.

"..... why, why is my body so far away?"

He muttered. And then he looked carefully at his body . And realized that the body had no head attached.

The head was already torn off.

The impact from the truck had severed his head, separating it from his body.

Looking at his crumpled headless body, *well, no matter how I look at it, I should die right*, those earlier uncertain thoughts were now made certain from the scene of how good a job he had accomplished in dying.

It was undoubtedly an instant death.

It was undoubtedly an instantaneous death.

It was a situation where it wouldn't be strange if his consciousness were lost at the moment his head was torn off and sent floating upwards to heaven.

"....."

Taito moved his eyeballs. As he did so, the scene shifted. The scene around his fallen body shifted, and was clearly visible to him.

Seeing that.

Seeing that, just as Taito wanted to shout out *eeehhhhhhhhh what the hell is this?*, from beside him.

"Woah ~ awesome ~! What's this what's this? Why is it still alive?"

For some reason, the girl whom Taito had saved, Mirai , was looking down at him with sparkling eyes.

On hearing that, Taito's gaze shifted upwards.

"Huh? It's not a matter of being awesome right?"

"No no, this is really awesome! This is the first time I'm seeing someone like this! Are you some kind of severed head human?"

"Severed head human... what kind of stupidity are you talking about..... wait, what the hell am I? Why am I still alive....."

As he said that, suddenly.

"Gyaaaaaaaaaaa."

Taito hollered. All of a sudden, his head, his back, his legs and arms were assaulted by a wave of excruciating pain.

"Ouucchhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!?"

He hollered, and on top of that, Mirai, with an excited looking face,

"Woahhhhhhh! Is it painful for your head to be torn off ? Is it painful? What does it compare to?"

"As I was saying, why the hell are you not surprised at all, are you Curious-chan? Are you Curious-chan!? Well

whatever, but now, what the hell is this! What in the world has happened to me!"

Taito cried out.

At the same time, his headless body raised up their fists in anger, and beat at the ground. It was as if they had responded to his thoughts, and beat at the ground. Looking at that.

"..... orh?"

Looking at that, Taito was increasingly bewildered.

Eh? Eh? Just now, did my headless body move? Huh, what's that? What's that?

Could it be.

"Could it be....."

After he murmured that, Taito's head started considering something stupid.

Now, why don't I try getting my separated body which is quite a distance away from here to stand up, he thought.

"....."

His body reacted before his very eyes. His headless body started getting up. However, because his spine was fractured, his body was bent at a strange angle, and it was essentially in a creepy pose, and then again, crack! With a strange sound, his spine returned to normal. Furthermore, the same sounds rang out in his arms and legs, and excluding his severed head, his whole body returned to normal ~.

"Huh, am I some kind of a monster!"

On hearing Taito's words, Mirai, with an astonished expression that seemed to indicate she had finally realized how abnormal this situation was,

"You, you, are you some kind of transforming robot?"

"No, as I was saying, what's up with your reaction!"

As Taito hollered.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaa!?"

Screams were heard.

He looked in the direction of those screams.

A housewife who was carrying a supermarket bag of spring onions was looking at the moving headless body of Taito,

"Mon, mon, monsterrrrrrrrrr!?"

Following that, the truck driver who had knocked into an innocent high school student, was about to get out hurriedly, but as he looked at the moving headless body of Taito,

"Wha, what the hell is this?"

He returned to his seat. And stepped on the accelerator . With that, it started making its escape.

"No, isn't it bad to hit and run?"

But the truck ignored Taito's retort and left.

And what was left were the eye-witnesses of this gruesome scene.

And those people who were surrounding the scene looked intently at him,

"..... mon, monster..... call the police, police!"

"No no no, wait a minute. It's me who was hit, isn't it? If you're calling the police, you should be asking them to chase after the truck....."

"Hello, is this the police? Something serious just happened! A monster..... a headless monster....."

"Wait a minuteeeeeeeeeeee!?"

Taito yelled, but nobody waited.

The number of people looking towards here with fear written on their faces was increasing.

This is bad, Taito thought.

This is really bad, Taito thought.

Isn't this clearly bad?

A headless monster was caught by the police!

Such a headline would appear in tomorrow's papers, and the day after tomorrow,

Its composition is currently being researched at the military research center.

Something like that happening would be really bad. Seriously bad. That's why,

"My body, move."

He said. As he did so, just as he had imagined, the body jumped up. And then it turned towards here. And started running. Looking at that running headless body,

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaa."

"Monsterrrrrrrrrrrrrr."

Such cries rang out, but, he could care less. And then, the headless body picked up Taito's head with its left hand.

On seeing that, Mirai,

"Woah ~, awesome! Wait, where are you going?"

"....."

But Taito ran without replying. He crossed the pedestrain crossing over to the other side, and just as he was about to enter the shopping district, the cries seemed about to come again.

"Shit shit shit."

As he said that, he made a U-turn. After that, even if it's just a little bit, in order to make himself appear normal, he set his head in its original position with both hands and held on to it as he ran ---

"....."

At that moment.

A strange *gyu* sound was heard.

A strange *gyu gyu* sound was heard from where his head was.

And then, his head.

"....."

His head was reattached to his body.

Everything had returned to normal.

Even though he was flashily knocked down by a truck, there was already no trace of pain left in his body. Even though his clothes looked messed up, there was not a single wound on his body. No, there was a place.

"....."

There was a place in his body that was running with all its might.

Just like what it used to be.

The back of the thigh which had had its tendon torn before, which should have resulted in him being unable to move the way before, did not give off a single bout of pain.

In response to the chain of abnormal events that were happening,

"..... what the hell is this?"

Taito said.

"..... what in the world has happened to my body?"

Even while he was saying that, his legs did not stop. In order to get as far away as possible from the accident site , he ran.

And additionally, it was in the direction opposite of his home.

After this. After something like this had happened, he could not return to his home. How could he, with such a body of a monster.

"....."

Turning around the alley, he passed through the shopping district. The people who saw Taito now were not shouting *monster* at him anymore. That was expected of course. Right now, there were no signs of injuries, fractures, or a head torn off.

Only his clothes were in a mess, *did that kid just get bullied or something?*, these were the looks he received from some of the people, but he couldn't care more. As long as no one was seeing him as a monster, he couldn't care more. *More importantly, this body. On top of that, the event that took place earlier. What in the world had happened? What in the world had happened to my body?*

He asked himself as he ran. He passed through the alleys between the buildings, entered the residence district, and passed through that as well, and stepped onto a wooded path which was seldom used by people.

The sky was already dark when he looked up. It was probably already past five. The street lamps started turning on one by one. But, even though there was some illumination on this wooded path from the lamps outside , it was still somewhat dark.

"It seems like a pair of perverts have been spotted there, so it's not usable during nighttime."

Haruka had said before. That's why there was hardly any people here.

As he was running on that wooded path, Taito considered the events so far. He tried thinking about the things that had happened to his body till now.

"....."

On pondering, it was in fact not as if he was completely clueless as to what had happened, he thought .

That's right.

It's not really like he knew nothing about everything and anything.

The reason was because it had been resounding.

Just now, as his head was torn off from his body, ever since he thought that he was going to die, from the depths of his mind.

From the depths of his heart, a faint dim voice, which would not have been audible without any conscious effort, had been resounding from within. He did not know what it was. He did not know why that voice had resounded from within him. However, the one thing he knew was that the voice was something extremely important. That's why Taito strained to listen to that voice.

He concentrated.

As he did so, the voice came whispering.

As he did so, the voice came whispering.

A sweet voice. A kind voice.

A happy sounding voice. A beloved voice.

He could hear it.

He could hear it.

And that voice said.

As if it was whispering into his ear, softly.

"I love you very much, Taito."

On hearing that, Taito's eyes widened.

Chapter 2 - 900 Seconds Of Afterschool Time

That was the voice of the girl in his dreams.

Sleep, sleep, sleep, she had beckoned in his dream; it was the voice of that girl.

Sleep, sleep, sleep, and then meet me, meet me, meet me.

Since I'm begging you.

Since I'm begging you, please don't forget me ---, she had beckoned in his dream; it was the voice of that girl.

The voice had said to him. It sounded happy, it sounded like it was on the verge of crying, but with a tinge of firmness, that girl's voice whispered to Taito.

"Ahh, you've finally died.....you've finally died..... I've been waiting all this while for this day, Taito..... but with this, at last..... the << Black Magic Poison >> lying within you has activated. At last, my powers are returning..... at last..... at last.....I can meet you..... now....."

The voice of the girl in his dream was turning over in

Taito's head. Over and over, over and over, turning over and over, thrusting into the depths of his heart.

And then the girl said.

"Now, hurry, and come save me..... Kurogane Taito."

On hearing that voice.

"....."

On hearing that voice, Taito, who had been running at full speed, started slowing down. One step, two steps, three steps, his moving legs slowed down, and before long, they came to a complete stop. On the dark, wooded path. He stopped his legs to catch his breath, which was ragged from the running. Breath in, breath out.

And then.

"..... what the hell was that. That dream..... that embarrassing, stupid dream..... don't tell me it was real?"

As he was murmuring, all of a sudden, there was a sound.

Rustle, rustle, it was the sound of swaying branches.

"Huh?"

Taito looked towards the source of the sound. And he saw two people dressed in a strange garb. A tall lanky white man, and a short macho man of Spanish lineage. The two were clad in purple robes, which are not even used by people for cosplaying magicians in this modern age.

Looking at the two resembling a pair of perverts, Taito recalled Haruka's words once again.

"It seems like two perverts have been spotted there, and it's too scary for me to use that path at night."

Even though that was what she had said, looking at the eyes of these two, Taito immediately knew that the two of them were not merely perverts. Looking at the two men who were glaring at him with a piercing gaze that clearly do not belong to any Tom, Dick, Harry, Taito said in an exasperated voice.

"..... geez, give me a break, what the hell is with today. I was stared at by the Gekkou whom I've never talked to

before, my head was torn off and I'm still alive, a girl whom I've never met confessed her love to me in my head..... and lastly, some foreigner perverts are glaring at me with a scary look, like some hired killers coming out of a movie..... what the hell? Is this an ill-fated day?"

While saying that, Taito tensed up his whole body. Preparing to run away. Since he could tell that the two foreigners were glaring at him with hostility.

Furthermore, these two were probably quite strong.

Taito could immediately tell from his karate experience. By looking at which parts of the body are more developed, he could more or less tell whether the person had any training in martial arts.

And the bodies of the two foreigners before him were clearly the type of bodies which had undergone martial arts training.

They also seemed to be quite skilled, he thought.

With eyes of hired killers, perverts who had come from foreign countries.

Looking at that.

"Really bad."

Taito said in a groaning tone.

He had heard that there were more of those types from foreign countries.

Hey pretty boy, I love ~ you ~ <3, saying that and attacking him; isn't that pretty bad.....

At that moment, the white began,

"Oiy, are you Kurogane Taito?"

"Wait, Japanese!"

"WHAT?"

"No, nothing....."

As he was saying that, Taito gradually lowered his body. Preparing to escape.

Preparing to escape from this incomprehensible situation.

Some strangers knowing his name, furthermore, his body had become something inexplicable, and on top of that, the voice of an unacquainted girl resounded in his head.

It was already too terrible.

There were too many things occurring in his situation which he couldn't grasp well.

In such times, it's best to run. In times where he couldn't launch the initiative, retreating doesn't make him any less of a man. That was taught to him by the same man who had taught Taito how fun karate was, his wise grade school physical education teacher. Ichinose-sensei.

Sensei had said.

"Oiy Taito. When you can't take the initiative, don't fight. Never fight a battle you can't win, get it? Don't confuse recklessness with courage."

And then, a few weeks after he taught him that important thing, he got married with his classmate who was just only eight years old, Sakuma Miki-chan! *We*

truly love each other!, he shouted something incomprehensible along those lines, took on a trial which he couldn't win, and did a good job in dying a noble death.

Since then, Taito has continued abiding by that important lesson that his sensei had taught him through his own example.

Never fight a battle in which he has no chance of winning.

Never fight a battle in which he could not grasp the situation.

That's why he would run.

"....."

He lowered his body even further, and and gathered his energy in his legs. Ever since he injured his leg, he hadn't move it much, and a wave of uncertainty on whether he could move it as well as in the past passed over him, but, he had no choice.

Hey pretty boy <3, if he's told that, he would make a break with everything he got.

That's why Taito gathered all his power into his legs.

"And so, Mr Otakus, what in the world are you guys? What the hell do you want from me, and furthermore, what in the world is happening to me?"

He asked. On hearing that, the foreigners' faces relaxed a little. Understanding they had managed to establish a conversation, they looked like they were willing to be open, and on top of that, the tension strung up in their bodies loosened up, and they started closing in.

Waiting for the right moment,

"Fool."

Taito mumbled and turned heel. With that, once again, he started running with all his might.

"Ah, hey, wait!"

"Let's give chase! Don't let him get away! We're going to catch him and kill him!"

The foreigners behind him yelled.

On hearing those words, as he was running, Taito's eyes widened.

"..... kill, kill him?"

And he turned his head around.

The two robed men were chasing after him with a terribly angry look on their faces.

In response to that. To that terribly dangerous *kill him!* line, which is often a joke among ordinary high school students, Taito couldn't but shiver in fear.

"They're kidding right?"

But they weren't.

The pair of foreigners took out something from their bosom. For some reason, they took out gleaming rod-like objects. He could immediately tell that they were knives. And then the white man said.

This time round in English,

"Kill him kill him!"

On hearing that, Taito was already on the verge of crying,

"Eh? What? Kill Bill? A movie?"

"Kill him!"

"Then again, this is not the time to be saying such stupid thingsssssss. What should I do? What should I do? Terrible, seriously terrible, I'm really going to get killed. Someone, someone help me! Policeeeeeeeeeee....."

At that moment.

At the moment he was yelling, he could feel something more terrible happening inside of his body. In other words, following the incomprehensible thing that had happened to him earlier, in succession, something more terrible was going to happen from here on? *What the hell! ?* He wanted to retort to himself at the thing that was going to happen.

He was already at his wit's ends.

"....."

For some reason, he was feeling abnormally sleepy.

Even when he was running at such a frantic pace, he found it hard to keep his eyes open. Against his will, his eyes closed, but even so, as he forcibly opened them persistently,

"Uwahhhhhhhhh stop! This is bad! It'd be terrible if I fall asleep now! It'd be terrible if I fall asleep here! Then again, why am I sleepy? Why the hell am I sleepy? What the hell is happening?"

As he hollered, his eyelids gradually fell shut. Despite using both of his hands to hold his eyelids open, he could no longer fight off the sleepiness. His knees started lowering. In his running state, he was about to fall to the ground from his sleepiness.

From behind him,

"Get him! Kill him!"

A voice shouted.

On hearing that, Taito,

"I don't want to dieeeeeeeeeeee."

As he desperately endured his sleepiness, he started running once more.

But that effort.

He could no longer sustain his last burst of effort.

Just until a while ago.

From the time he woke up till the time he bid Haruka farewell, he was merely leading an ordinary life.

A supporting character of someone else's life, a person who didn't stand out, not knowing what to strive for, just leading an ordinary regular life.

But yet, right now, his life took a 180 degree turn.

Along with the voice of that girl.

Along with the voice of that girl whom he had exchanged an important promise a very long time ago.

"It's alright. It's alright Taito. So sleep. And then everything will turn out fine. Now, just like always.

Just like the past. Leave your body to me, please sleep already."

With that voice.

With that voice, she intruded on his consciousness.

Even though if he loses consciousness, he might be assaulted and killed by the two scary foreigners behind him, but still, Taito readily lost his consciousness.

His knees gave way. His body stopped running by itself and he started falling to the ground.

And then, that scene started flowing.

The dream he had always seen flowed in.

Time and time and again, the repeating dream flowed in.

That was an old memory of the distant past.

That was an old memory of the faraway, distant past.

That's right.

That was probably a memory when I was still around six or seven years old.

It was a memory of me meeting a certain young girl.

It was a memory of me meeting a young girl, whom before long became a regular playmate of mine.

Indeed, at that time, as a result of him moving frequently , he had transferred school thrice during his first grade, and for some reason, on the third time he transferred school, things didn't go quite well and he was the target of some meaningless bullying; it was during that time.

But initially, he was fine. He wasn't depressed even when he was subjected to some amount of bullying.

Well, he had thought that it was something not unheard of for one who kept changing schools.

Besides, in the meantime, he got used to it, and had had the naive thought that he would be able to make a lot of friends and enjoy himself, just like in the previous school.

However, that didn't go too well.

Beyond his expectations, the bullying continued for a long, long time.

No one had talked to him.

Dog dung was placed on his desk.

His indoor shoes went missing.

As these went on, gradually, gradually, it became more unbearable.

In the morning, with a show of enthusiasm, he would wave goodbye to his parents and set off for school with a smile on his face, but he was really filled with painful and heart-tearing despair till the point he readily wanted to die, but feeling too shameful to talk to anyone about it, he had no choice but to go to school in that manner. However, words like *Die* or *Disappear* were written on

the blackboard or on pieces of paper stuffed into his shoe cupboard, and people whom he had never talked to and should know nothing about him were bad-mouthing and laughing behind him for no reason, and on top of that, when his sensei asked him, *Kurogane-kun, are you ok?*, he would always reply with, *It's ok, everyone's just joking around*, but in the end, he would make excuses such as having a stomachache and leave school early, but since there was no way he could go home immediately, he would go to the park to kill time.....

Everyday in this manner.

"....."

Everyday, everyday, idling in that park at a time with no children. With the clock ticking at the side of the toilet in the park, he would always wait until its time for him to go home.

During those times, there were also occasions in which he cried. There were occasions in which he would cry about his wretchedness and empty life.

However, as much as possible, he would refrain from crying out. Since if he had cried and was seen by some adults who might call up to him, he would have to be

honest about everything. *I was bullied for being a nerd, and couldn't really deal well with the things happening in school, and it would be too shameful for me if my parents or teacher got wind of this, and if I think about it now, it shouldn't have been such a big deal, but yet, during the time that if they do get wind of this, I would definitely feel very ashamed.*

That's why as much as possible, he would refrain from crying out. Without letting the adults getting wind of this , without letting tears flow, he cried.

But.

"....."

But, that day was different.

On that day, the person who was crying in the park wasn't me.

Having excused myself from school early, without going home, I took a back lane hidden from public view towards the park, and someone was there before me, on the swing which I had always used. The swing which I had always used was occupied by a little girl.

It was a girl of around my age. It was a girl around the same age as me. It was a little girl who, like me, should not be here in this park at this time for her age.

That little girl was sitting on the swing alone, crying.

For an instant, he was hesitant, *should I call out to her, what should I do?*

Since for the past two months or so, he had no friends whom he could talk to, and was wondering whether it's good idea to call out to her --- *should a hated person like me call out to her?*

But, I made my decision and said.

"..... are you alright?"

I called out to her.

On hearing that, she shook, seemingly out of surprise, and looked towards me,

"..... can you see me?"

"Eh?"

"No, it's nothing."

"..... erm, are you really ok? Did something sad happen?"

She looked at me and began,

"Why did you think so?"

She said. And I replied.

"Why, you say, because you have been crying."

"Have been crying? Me?"

"You."

As I said that, she had a surprised look again, and touched her own cheeks. And then, she scooped up a tear and looked at it.

"..... you're right."

She said.

"You didn't realize it?"

"Yeah."

"You're a strange one."

As I said that, she merely smiled and puffed up her cheeks.

"I'm not strange."

And she glowered at me.

On seeing that, I frantically,

"Are you angry?"

I asked.

She shook her head.

"Nope. I'm happy that you called out to me. Since I've always been alone....."

As she said that, she smiled lonelily.

I was fascinated by her smiling face. Her smile which was tinged with sadness was too beautiful, and I was fascinated by it.

And I said.

Looking at her face, I said.

"So, you're alone as well. Well, we are comrades then."

She again had a surprised look,

"Comrades?"

She said.

In response to that,

"Yeah."

I nodded.

As I said that, she looked at me blankly. And for some reason , she suddenly seemed to be on the verge of crying.

"..... comrades. Comrades..... I had never thought that the hated me would have any comrades however..... will you become my comrade?"

She said. And the meaning of that, the meaning of what she had said, was not known to me then.

That's why I replied immediately.

"Of course. I'm bored all by myself everyday."

"Really?"

"Really."

"Then, then, will you be with me?"

"Yeah."

I nodded.

"Let's become friends."

I said.

Seemingly happily surprised, she smiled.

And after that, we would always hang out together.

Always the two of us playing together.

I could remember the happy and fun times we had had when we were hanging out together. Even though only unpleasant things continued to occur in school, the times spent with her were full of joy.

However, the time for me to transfer school came again.

To go to a completely different place from here, back to my former school.

Even though I had always wanted to transfer school.

Even though I had always wanted to return to my former school.

Yet I cried.

Not wanting to leave her, I cried.

But yet, even just before I moved, she appeared.

With a happy face.

With a beautiful and lovely face which I could not imagine to belong to a human being.

"Tada. I've come ~."

Even just before I moved, at the park, she appeared.

Come to think of it.

"....."

Even though it should have been something real strange, but as a child, I didn't find anything peculiar about it.

*No, by all appearances, she was no longer a **human.***

Her long lavendar colored hair was flickering and shifting through a series of seven colors. Involuntarily wanting to touch this person, with fair white skin, and ebullient, mischievous, deep crimson eyes.

Her figure was extraordinarily beautiful.

Her figure was extraordinarily unworldly.

Clearly not a human being, but something else.

But, at that time, I did not realize all of these.

I was only happy to be able to see her.

I was only happy to be able to play with her.

Hanging out with her, everyday was fun.

Hanging out with her, it was always fun.

And then on a certain day.

On a certain day, she,

"It's about time to do it."

She came saying.

She came saying today was the time to do the thing she had mentioned to me before.

I asked.

"Are you going to suck my blood?"

On hearing that, she replied with a smile.

"I'm not going to suck it. Your blood that is."

At the unpopular park at twilight.

A park with only the two of us.

"I'm going to inject my poison into you. A poison that will make you unable to leave me."

That was something known as black magic.

In order for the two people to be unable to leave each other, a precious magic.

<< A magic that would bind two people in love for eternity, she had said. >>

And then, her alluring pink lips parted. Beyond those lips, I could see her small cute teeth. Her lips closed in and she pressed those teeth against the back of my neck.

"Here goes?"

She said.

At the same time. I could feel the poison being injected into the back of my neck in one breath. The poison was entering. Her binding **<< *Black Magic* *Poison* >>** *was filling me up.*

And then, everything ended immediately.

She drew away from me, and as expected, with a delighted face, she looked intently at me.

"Alright, it's done ~. With this, you won't be able to leave me. Alive, or dead, forever and ever. Are you prepared for that? "

Of course, I couldn't possibly be prepared for that.

But the willful her didn't seem to care about that. She merely smiled delightfully. Smiling mischievously. She was smiling happily at the fact that we were now truly tied together .

And then she said.

Looking at me intently, she said.

"Tell me you love me. After that, the **<< *Black Magic* *Poison* >>** *will be completed. Or is it that..... is it that you hate me?"*

There was no way, that I would hate her.

There was no way that I would hate her.

But yet, she was making an unsettled face. She was making a lonely face. Always brimming with confidence, willfulness, and filled with so much energy that could have make her seem annoying, on that day, she was truly making an unsettled face, and I didn't want to see such a face from her.

That's why I said.

The words that would complete her **<< *Black Magic* *Poison* >>**.

"I also..... I also love you, Himea."

That's what I said.

In the instant I said that, I remembered.

That's right.

Her name is Himea.

<< Saitohimea >>.

That is what she calls herself.

I had asked her, *are you a foreigner?*. After laughing, *That's not it, though this name is a little too difficult to call, isn't it? Then, just call me Himea. That will be better right? Call me Himea, Taito ---*, she replied.

How did I forget all those conversations?

How had I forgotten them?

Despite the fact they were such precious memories, how had I forgotten all that?

That was the thought.

That was the thought that I held.

But the dream continued further.

The me inside the dream called her name.

Himea.

Himea.

Himea.

"I love you, Himea."

In the instant I utter that.

I knew that anything and everything had changed. I knew that the world, and the composition of my body, anything and everything had changed.

It had arrived.

The curse.

It had arrived.

The **<< *Black Magic* *Poison* >>**.

Her beautiful pink lips parted, revealing a little of her small teeth.

I like looking at that smiling face.

I like looking at that unyielding smiling face of hers.

That's why I smiled as well.

Gazing at her, I smiled.

And then once again,

"I like you, Himea."

At the moment I said that, my head flew. Something from the side, an unknown light came mowing down, and my head was dancing in mid-air.

On seeing that, Himea's face contorted into an expression that seemed to be on the verge of crying.

"Ta, Taito!?"

Frantically, she came forward to catch hold of my head.

Completely surprised, I did not understand what had happened.

I only knew that Himea had caught hold of my head and hugged it to her chest. That chest was very warm.

"What's the matter?"

I said.

On hearing that, with a slightly fumbling voice, Himea,

"It's, it's alright. There's nothing for Taito to worry about."

Even though she said that, her face clearly said otherwise.

"Uhn shit, I'm already discovered? Even though I thought I would have a little more time....."

As she was saying, Himea reattached my head to my body. As she did that, I was surprised by how easily my head had reattached itself.

"What in the world is this?"

I asked, but Himea did not answer.

With a stern expression, her deep crimson eyes were looking at the top of the jungle gym in the park.

I turned my sight there. I turned my sight towards the top of the jungle gym.

There sat a boy.

A boy of around the same age. With pitch black hair and piercing eyes, the young boy was dangling his legs, letting them swing to and fro, and looked towards here with a cheerful face.

And then the boy said.

"..... so, are you that rumored Saitohimea?"

Himea replied.

"..... who's asking?"

"Me? My name is Hinata....."

But that was interrupted by Himea,

"That's not what I'm asking. I'm asking you what's your purpose in coming here. Are you sent by the ***Church*** *? Cut me*

some slack, would you? I'm no longer a comrade of Bhalskra. I've never thought of undoing his seal. That's why there's no meaning to confining me."

She said.

Even though I did not understand the meaning of her words, the one thing that I did understand was that she was being pursued by something.

However, on hearing that. On hearing Himea's words, a smile floated on the face of the young boy who called himself Hinata.

*"..... **Church** , what's that?"*

Instantly, Himea's face stiffened. I could tell that her body was shaking in nervousness.

"..... then, you are....."

On hearing that, with a swing, Hinata jumped down from the jungle gym. At the same time his feet touched the ground, the ground became stained with a rotting black. From the ground that was stained like it was rotten, a giant claw was born, and the hand of a monster flew out. Following that, the owner of that hand appeared. With the face of a lion, and the

wings of a bat, a monster --- at a glance, it's like a horror movie where a monster in the form of a devil comes flying out.

That thing glowered at Himea. It gave off an ear-splitting howl. Following that, Hinata gave a few taps to the leg of that devil and then, directing his words to Himea,

"..... now, let's go revive the Bhalskra that you've betrayed and sealed up. I have a great interest in his power."

On hearing Hinata's words, a slight smile floated on Himea's face.

"..... so you're that huh ~. You are one of those mad believers of the Devil, aren't you. I'm so scared, I'm going to lose."

On hearing that, Hinata shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah-rah-rah, you're not surprised by the form of the devil?"

Himea smiled,

"Not at all. Do you think something of that level of a devil minion will bother me at all? Do you really think with that level of power, it can be a match for me, for us

<< *Most Ancient Sorcerers*[6] >> *....."*

But at that moment.

Hinata said.

Interrupting Himea's words, Hinata said.

"Not counting you, that's what the remaining three **<< *Most Ancient Sorcerers* >>** *had said, but all of them died easily."*

On hearing that.

"..... eh?"

Himea said.

But Hinata's words did not stop.

"Now, how much of an entertainment will you provide me, I wonder?"

Just as he said that, Hinata's figure disappeared.

Immediately after, with a strangling grip on Himea's neck, he slammed her to the ground.

"Ah-uh."

She cried out in pain.

On seeing that, I frantically,

"Stop!"

I screamed.

And then, as I was about to hit Hinata,

"You're in the way."

Hinata waved his hand lightly. As he did that, a small light materialized in front of his hand. That light struck me in the chest.

And in that instant.

"....."

My upper body readily disintegrated.

For a short instant, I could not think about anything. I could not hear anything. An excruciating pain drove me crazy. But, that only lasted for a few seconds. Gradually, my consciousness returned.

And I could hear Himea's voice.

"Taito!?"

A voice that was on the verge of crying.

A voice that was on the very brink of tearing.

No, in truth, she was crying. While her neck was being strangled by Hinata, her body pressed against the ground, she was looking towards me with tears flowing.

Hinata looked at her.

And then he looked intently towards me, and with a slightly surprised expression,

"For him not to have died after having your upper body erased..... I see. He is your contractor, your guard, and your beloved..... if so, then I would have to eliminate him first....."

Even before Hinata had said all that, I went hitting him again.

"Leave Himea alone....."

But at that moment, Hinata said.

"Sentinel, kill him."

Instantly.

I could hear the beast's roar behind me. And I turned my head around. As I did so, the giant beast which was twice my size and was standing immediately behind me made a swipe at me with its paw.

"....."

I did not cry out.

The four claws of its paw pierced through my body, of which one went through my neck, rendering me unable to make a sound. With that, I was struck by its paw and sent flying. I was sent flying for about ten metres and fell onto the ground. My fractured skull, fractured legs, and my body which had

landed in an awkward position and was assaulted by an intense wave of pain that made me want to cry, all of that was healed up immediately.

For some reason, they were healed up immediately.

It was probably due to the ***<< Black Magic Poison >>*** *. It was due to the effect of the* ***<< Black Magic Poison >>*** *that Himea had injected into me. And I finally understood the reason why in the world she has bestowed this power onto me.*

So that I can protect her.

So that I can protect her during times like this.

That's why I stood up and glared at Hinata. I glared at the monster who was waving around an incredulous amount of power.

On seeing that, Hinata made a troubled face and said.

"You can't die even with this..... uh~n. That's why it's bothersome to fight with a ***<< Vampire Most Ancient Sorcerer >>*** *. What kind of* ***<< Black Magic Poison >>*** *gets injected into the guard; it's*

almost impossible to know. What the hell is he? Saitohimea. Even though he appears to be a powerless kid, what kind of power did you confer on him?"

On hearing that, Himea, who was having her neck strangled , said. Even with a pained expression, she grinned broadly.

"As if I'd tell the likes of you."

"Uh~n. Well, nevermind....."

As he was saying that, I started running again.

To save Himea.

To save her.

"Remove your hand from Himea....."

But, at that moment, a sword came flying from somewhere. And it went through my neck.

"Gah."

I groaned, but I did not stop. On top of that, another sword appeared and pierced through my stomach, but even with that, I did not stop.

On seeing that, once again, Hinata,

"Even with this, you won't die, huh? Then, what about this ?"

Twang! A sound rang out from his finger.

Two swords appeared, and came piercing through my left and right shoulders, swinging downwards thrusting into the ground and pinning me, rendering me immobile.

Blood flowed. Blood flowed from my neck and shoulders. Even when my strength was gradually, gradually ebbing away from my body, I did not give up.

As I was trying to pull out the swords from the ground,

"..... shit..... shit, come out. I'm going to go save Himea."

On hearing that, Himea said. While crying, she said.

"St, stop. It's enough. It's enough, Taito. Don't move anymore."

"I'm fine. I'll be right there. Himea. I'll be right there....."

On hearing my words.

After looking intently at me, Hinata spoke.

"..... hmm. It's useless even with this. Just now, it's apparent that I've aimed for the heart however..... well, you're still alive even after your upper body was disintegrated. So it's not related to the heart huh? Then this time round, I'll go for the lower body. There's a possibility that the core of your life has shifted down to your lower body. Then, light."

On saying that, once again, light began to gathered before his hand. It was the same light that had disintegrated by upper body earlier. The light was aimed in my direction. In order to dodge that light, I tried to pull out the swords. Frantically attempting to pull out the swords. But they wouldn't bulge. It seemed like I couldn't move a single inch.

"Shit, shit, shit."

I said as I completely failed in my desperate attempts to pull out the swords. Still a child, possessing the arms of a child, it seemed like I lacked the arm strength, the reason behind my inability to pull out the swords, or to protect her.

The current me.

The current me had not a single shred of power.

Shit, shit, shit.

"Shit!!"

I hollered.

With a teary voice, I hollered.

But even when I hollered, even when I hollered in a teary voice, there was nothing I could do.

There was nothing I could do.

At that moment, Hinata seemed about to say something. Aiming the light in my direction, he seemed about to say something.

Instantly.

"Please stop already!!"

Himea screamed.

"I, I would listen to whatever you say, so, please..... please stop....."

She said.

On hearing that, my eyes widened.

Looking at her resigned face. At her weeping face.

That's also for my sake.

It's all my fault.

Because I was weak, I had to see her, the girl who was always full of confidence, stubborn, and a little mischievous, I had to see her pleading with Hinata.

"U, uwahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh."

I hollered. I hollered frantically.

But even so, there was nothing I could do.

"Pull them out! Pull them out! Pull them out!"

I desperately tried to pull the swords out.

"Pull them out! Pull them out! Pull them outttttttttttttttttttttttttt!"

I desperately tried to pull the swords out. But, they didn't buldge. It seemed like I had not enough strength. What's with this, I thought. Why, why don't I have the strength? Why don't I have the strength at all? I thought.

"....."

And in the end, I couldn't move at all.

No matter how much I struggle and flounder, I couldn't move.

Hinata said. With a slightly happy face, he looked down at Himea,

"Ahh, so that's the mechanism. There's a limit to the number of times, isn't it? I've already killed him six times. And, the next would be the seventh, and you reacted. In other words, it would be bad if I kill him for the seventh time. In other words, he won't revive after his seventh death --- is that correct?"

"....."

On hearing that, Himea did not reply. With a face on the verge of crying, she merely looked in my direction.

But Hinata said.

"Ah-reh, is it that you can't hear anything I say? If you're not answering, then I shall....."

"Wa, wait."

Himea spoke. With a shaking voice, she spoke.

"That, that's right. Just as you've said..... as long as he's not killed seven times consecutively within fifteen minutes, he won't die --- that's my curse that Taito bears....."

"That's all?"

"That's all."

"I see. That's an interesting contract exchange you've made. ..... a ***<< Curse >>*** *conferring immortality is indeed of a high level magic but..... for a mere human to be conferred immortality for just a short amount of time, what in the world can he accomplish? Without the power to protect you, without the power to stop me, with only the ability of not being able to die, what in the world can he accomplish? I don't get it at all. I don't understand what's your motive at all. With all that power that a* ***<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>*** *should possess,*

why did you utilize it in such a meaningless manner? Could it be that you are an idiot?"

Hinata said. And then I thought that it was just as he had said.

If Himea had the power to confer upon me another kind of power, she should be doing just that, I thought.

No, in fact, the contractor need not be me, I thought. Even though it would definitely have been better for her to confer some great ability to someone who's more capable, stronger, and more adult-like.

Why did Himea confer a power upon such a mere powerless, incompetent child who only gets bullied by others?

I don't get it.

I don't get it.

Why did she do such a thing? Why didn't she choose someone who could be more of a use to her? Why did someone like me,

"....."

Why did someone like me got chosen?

As I was about to ask that, Hinata continued. With a pair of extremely, extremely, extremely bored, demeaning eyes, he looked at her,

"..... I see. You've fallen for your contractor? ..... that's why you've conferred him with such a useless power. You've done something completely meaningless by giving your power to someone who would only drag you down. In order for the one you've fallen for to not die, in order for him to stay by your side without dying, you've given away a foolish power. And this is the result. So this is the truth about the renowned monster, Saitohimea..... ha, haha, how boring."

That's what he said.

And there was no longer anything I could say.

I've understood why she had conferred me with such a power.

And I realized she was looking towards here at me with a tear-streaked, yet happy-looking and affectionate face.

"....."

There was nothing I could say.

Himea then said.

"Please..... please cut me some slack at this juncture. Whatever it is, I'll do as you say..... so please stop shaming me beyond this in front of Taito....."

She said.

On hearing that, Hinata nodded. As expected, he nodded with a hint of boredom.

"Alright. If you would be obedient and just follow me..... I'll let him live....."

On hearing that.

"No!"

I hollered.

Himea then, once again with a sad but gentle face, looked towards me,

"It'd be fine. Everything will be over quickly. So Taito, just close your eyes."

She said to me.

And I shouted things like, 'No way! I'll definitely save Himea!'

Despite the fact that I was helpless. Despite the fact that I was powerless.

I just kept on shouting how I'd save her.

On hearing those, Hinata said.

"Geez, that's why I hate humans. In spite of not having any power, they still clamor on incessantly. It really pisses me off. But because of our agreement, I'll let him live ,however, ... but, it'll be a bother if he follows after us, so I'm going to erase his memory. Is that good?"

On hearing that, Himea's expression changed. Her weeping face further contorted in sadness. But before long, she seemed to have made up her mind,

"Ok."

She nodded.

Hinata then released her neck, and closed in toward me.

"Stop!"

I yelled.

Hinata shrugged his shoulders,

"Without any power, no matter how much you clamour, nothing's going to change, you know?"

He said to me.

But still, I yelled at him to stop. I asked him to stop.

"I don't want to forget Himea."

Instantly. Himea's face contorted again. With tears flowing, she sobbed. She shut her eyes, and turned to face another direction.

I looked at that.

I looked in her direction.

"I..... I'll never forget!"

I hollered.

"I'll definitely come and save Himea."

I hollered.

"So wait for me. I'll definitely..... I'll....."

At that moment.

Hinata reached his hand out towards my head.

"You'll forget. Promptly."

And then I forgot, about anything and everything.

Those forgotten memories.

"....."

All of a sudden, for some reason, he remembered them .

Taito stopped his legs.

Somewhere along the wooded path in the dark night.

He stopped his legs that were running away from the hentai foreigners.

And then he lightly pressed his hand against his head. He lightly pressed his hand against the head in which a strange throbbing pain remained.

And then,

"Uwahhhhhhhhhhhhh, shitttttttttttttttt!"

He shouted with all his might without any reason.

And then he thought.

What the hell, he thought.

What the hell's with me, he thought.

What the hell was I doing all this while, he thought.

Even though he had said that he wouldn't forget. Even though he had said that he would definitely go save her.

But yet, in the end, he had forgotten.

And he had led a regular life. Carefreely, slackingly, sluggishly, always spacing out, he had led an ordinary, regular life.

He couldn't do karate anymore?

He had lost his dream?

He was a supporting character after all and couldn't find something he could do?

Am I an idiot?

Aren't there a lot of things I can do?

Aren't there a lot of things I must do?

But yet, many years had passed. Many years had passed since she was taken away.

He couldn't even remember the feelings she had held for himself. And since he had always misunderstood the embarrassing dreams he had, he was unable to even put a sense of reality to the feelings he had held then.

That amount of time had flowed away. An unbelievable amount of time had flowed away.

And during all that time, Himea; how many years, how many years, how many years.....

"Damn! How many years had Himea..... continued waiting..... "

As he muttered, he turned around.

Facing the wooded path, from where the two robed foreigners carrying knives in their hands came running.

Seeing that, thump, thump, Taito's heart was pounding at a rapid rate. Then, he tried thrusting his nails into his face. As he pull them out of his skin, blood flowed. But immediately after that, he could feel his wounds healing up.

After ascertaining that, he took out his mobile phone from his pocket. He opened it. The time was already six.

If he went back home now, his Mum would have finished preparing dinner, and together with his little sister, *Onii-chan had said that he would be back home early today, but yet*, they would probably say something along those lines.

Well, that was of no consequence for now.

The important thing now was the time he was knocked down by the truck. The time he was knocked down by the truck, the time he had died. More than thirty minutes had passed since then. In other words, it meant that the timer had been reset.

His own power --- he wouldn't die unless he was killed seven times in fifteen minutes, the power conferred to him by Himea.

That had already been reset.

"..... which means that there wouldn't be a problem even I die six times from now on....."

Taito murmured.

It would be okay even if he die six times.

"Then."

He said.

With that, he slowly lowered his pose. He adopted the basic stance of karate. And then,

"Then it'll be a breeze."

He murmured, and with that, Taito put a step forward.

As he did that, the two foreigners had a slightly surprised look on their faces, but right after that, a smile then floated on their faces,

"Hah. Karate? With the fighting level of a student, do you really think you can beat us?"

The man of Spanish lineage sped up his movements. With a sharp movement, he came thrusting in with his knife. That movement was really sharp. It was so sharp that it's all one could do just to dodge it.

But.

"....."

Taito did not dodge. Neither did he try pushing it away with his hand. He seemed to be receiving it straight on with his chest,

"Are you crazy?"

The man of Spanish lineage shouted out with surprise.

And with that, the knife pierced into Taito's chest. Completely unconcerned with the knife, Taito's fist struck into the solar plexus of the man of Spanish lineage . Completely unconcerned with his own death, he put in all his strength into his strike.

"Gaha."

The man of Spanish lineage groaned and fell to the ground. Of course. It was accompanied with a reaction in Taito's fist. It was accompanied with a reaction strong enough to destroy his own fist. It was already at the level where he put in every ounce of his strength into the strike without fear of any retaliation. But that kind of thing was normally not possible. Completely conquering the fear of death and the fear of pain, putting in all of one's strength into an attack against the enemy, such a thing was normally not possible. But he did that.

The short stumpy macho man whose body appeared to be clad in an armor of muscles was defeated in a single hit. In reaction to that.

"..... awesome. "

Taito uttered without thinking.

Following that, this time round, he turned towards the tall, white man. The white man was looking at Taito with a face already contorted in fear. His gaze was locked onto his chest, at the place where the heart should be located, where a knife was protruding,

"..... you damn monster."

He said.

Taito shrugged his shoulders. Looking intently at the white man,

"If you're scared and want to surrender, that will make things easier for me."

But the white man laughed.

"Surrender? Who? "

He said and threw away his knife. Following that, he again took out another knife from his bosom. However, this time round, the shape of the knife was different from the previous one. The hilt was in the shape of a cross.

Taito looked at that.

Cross. Cross. Taito looked at the cross.

"Ah, could it be that you guys are from the **Church** or something?"

On hearing that, the color of the white man's face changed. Looking straight at Taito with a glare,

"Do you know about us?"

But Taito shook his head.

"Not at all. It's just that the name kind of propped up in an old memory. I see. So you guys are from the **Church** huh? That means you probably can't be a comrade of that Himea."

That was something that came up earlier in his dream, from his recollection. For some reason, it seemed like Himea was being pursued by something called the

Church, but Hinata didn't seem to be affiliated with the **Church**. Then, these weren't the guys who had taken Himea away.

But still, even so, probably,

"Perhaps you are more well informed than me?"

Taito said.

On hearing that, the white man fixed a glare on Taito,

"Do you intend to force information out of me?"

"Well, I'll be grateful if you're willing to talk without the use of force however..... but then again, what's this? Why are you guys attacking me all of a sudden?"

In response to that question, the white man replied relatively simply.

"It's the prophecy. It was foretold that the familiar of **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>** Saitohimea will revive around here..... and, we met you..... we were ordered to kill you when we meet you, or to capture you if you're weak, but....."

"I'm stronger than you think?"

On hearing that, a smile floated on the white man's face,

"It's the opposite."

He said. And then he moved. He pointed the cross towards Taito.

And following that.

"..... SEIIRU, KURAIESU, TARATORURINE....."

At the same time he was uttering those nonsensical words in an orderly fashion, the center of the cross started glowing.

Taito looked at that and thought that it's going to be something awful.

It was that light again. A light similar to that released by Hinata. A laser, or a beam, or magic, or some psychic powers, what was it exactly was unknown but at any rate , the light was something awful. Looking at that,

"Ahhhhhhhhhhh, it looks really bad, should I dodge it or not, I've to make up my mind....."

At that moment, he could hear that voice again.

He could hear the voice of that person who fought for the sake of marrying an eight year old girl and got destroyed wonderfully, the voice of Ichinose sensei.

"Oiy Taitio, if you can't grasp the initiative, don't fight. Never fight a battle you can't win. Don't confuse bravery with foolhardiness."

And thus, right now, he realized that he could not tell the classification of the type of light that was about to be released before his very eyes.

If this light was fired off for the sake of destroying him , then it won't matter. Since he could die five more times, it wasn't a problem. But what if the light contained another power? Say, for example, if the light's power was to immobilize and restrain him, what should he do then?

It'd bad if he took it on. Extremely bad.

"Then I shall dodge."

With a large step, he jumped to the side.

At the same time, the white man fired the light, but he fired it towards the place where Taito had been before he dodged.

It was just as Taito had predicted.

The light fired off by the white man was in the shape of some form of a net and it struck the man of Spanish lineage, and went wrapping round his body, binding him.

On seeing that, Taito said.

"A pity you missed ~"

The white man then smiled.

"Nope, it's at just where I've aimed."

And with that, he carried the man of Spanish lineage still wrapped in the glowing net and started running. That was in the direction opposite of Taito, in the direction of the wooded path, he made his escape.

"What, you are escaping!?"

Taito said.

The white man then turned to face him,

"I'll kill you next time."

"Huh? I don't think you can escape while carrying....."

But, at that moment, the white man further went on to take a lump of something out. And then,

"Hoh-reh."

He flung it towards Taito.

In response to that, Taito,

"Eh?"

He said as he caught hold of it. And he looked at it. It was a black mass resembling something that could only be seen in action movies.

"Could, could this be..... a hand grenade?"

At the time he said that, the hand grenade glowed.

Following that, he could feel his body burning and being blown flying. *Gyahhhhhhhhhh*, he cried out in extreme pain as his body was sent dancing in the air, making a few spins before falling. He landed head first, *gokin (sfx)*, his neck broke and with that, he fell.

And then after some time passed after he had fallen, he got up. *Gokin (sfx)*, he further went on to fix his head with his hands, after which he took in a deep breath,

"..... to throw a hand grenade in the park, are you guys idiotsssssssssssss!?"

He yelled. But the robed pair were already nowhere to be seen. Realizing that,

"Uwah, shit, they got away ~."

He groaned, after which he looked down at his messed up disheveled clothes. And then,

"..... geez, what excuse should I make to my parents today?"

He said in a fed-up voice.

However, at the moment he said that, his clothes started regenerating piece by piece.

"Eh? Eh? Even the clothes are being regenerated? Even if such graciousness were not extended....."

Looking at the completely repaired tatters and healed up wounds,

"Well, with this kind of power, there's nothing that can go beyond this however....."

While murmuring that, he looked up.

Following that, he looked intently at the wooded path on which he just fought the pair of violent foreigners, and thought for a while.

He thought about the fight just a while ago.

Firstly, he died once from the knife wound. Following that, he died another time from the blast of the hand grenade, and he probably died again during the time when he fell to the ground and broke his neck as well.

In other words, he could only die at most three more times.

At that moment, once again, he took out his mobile phone from his pocket. And he breathed a sigh of relief on seeing that the phone seemed to be still intact after the blast.

He checked the time on his mobile. No more than five minutes had passed since the start of the fight.

Taito committed it to memory. He committed to memory the sensation of the amount of time that had passed in the five minutes of the fight. The fact that he had already been killed three times was carved into his mind. In spite of having ten minutes remaining, he could only afford to die another three times. And that was pretty bad, he thought. The enemies just now were not really that strong, if he were to encounter stronger enemies, it was fearfully possible that dying seven times in fifteen minutes would be an easy feat. So it was necessary for him to be more vigilant the next time, Taito thought. Well, at any rate,

"..... before the next time occurs, I should buy a watch that can track time accurately..... will something like a G-shock withstand a blast from a hand grenade? Perhaps , that's indeed too much to ask for?"

While saying all that, he looked around his surroundings.

As expected, it was an unpopular, dark wooded path.

After looking around,

"So, what should I do next?"

He muttered.

"..... it's good that I remembered the various stuff but, now, how should I go about gathering information on Himea from here on?"

At the moment he said that.

The voice came again.

That voice.

Her voice.

The nostalgic voice of Himea.

That voice said.

With a voice that, for some reason, was softer than before,

"Ah-rah, so this is the end, it seems. It seems like these are all of the remaining of my thoughts left inside of you. But, it's already alright, right? Taito. You've properly awakened, right? That's why I'll be able to see you in a moment. The promise. If we ever get separated , at that place..... we'll meet again at that place..... that's the promise made between us....."

But at that point, the voice disappeared.

At the same time, he could feel that those thoughts of hers and the like which had been resounding in him had disappeared.

He could feel that all those things that had been embedded within the depths of his heart all this while had disappeared.

And all of a sudden, a feeling of loneliness filled his heart.

As the precious feeling of being together all this while was gone, a feeling of loneliness filled his heart.

But he had no time to be bothered by that.

The reason was because he had no further need of her thoughts.

Her words just now.

Her words that were cut off.

"At that place..... we'll meet again at that place..... that's the promise made between us....."

Remembering those words, Taito said.

"..... that place so as to speak, where is it?"

After saying that, *Uwah, this is bad*, he thought. After letting her wait for nine years, *Well, sorry, sorry, I've forgotten where our appointed meeting place is*, isn't saying such a thing a little unforgivable?

"Uwah, what should I do? I kind of feel that it'll be really terrible if I don't recall it properly..... erm..... what's that again? What kind of promise did I make with her again?"

He tried searching his memory, but not a single thing came up.

More importantly, while this could be due to the fact that he had forgotten about her for a good many years, right now, his memories were still jumbled up.

His memories of the times he had spent with her were vague. If he were to see her again after all this while, he would be unsure of how he should behave, that was how vague things were.

"....."

But, even so, there was no question that he had to go meet her.

Because it had been nine years. Because she had waited for him for nine long years.

That's why Taito desperately tried to remember. He racked his brains and desperately tried to remember. Not

from the voice in Himea's thoughts that were left behind, but from her voice that was left in his own memories, he desperately searched.

At that moment.

"Ah....."

He said.

And then from the depths of his memories. From the depths of his memories which had not been touched for a long, long time.

"If say, Taito and I got separated....."

He found those words of hers of that time from his memories.

"Ah, is it this?"

He said.

"Wait, what if I'm mistaken?"

"Ahhhhhhh, but whether it's a mistake or not, for now, if I don't go take a look....."

After saying that, he turned on his heel.

And along the wooded path of the night, in the direction from where he had come, he ran.

The destination was once again the park.

The park where he had played with her often.

Before he knew it, shedding his old ordinary life, starting on a new path, toward the park, he started running.

That very scene ---

That girl who was saved from the rampaging truck by Taito, Andou Mirai, was staring at it.

With her short body, she had scrambled up a stone wall with utmost effort, and with only her eyes above her cover, she secretly saw the leaving Taito off.

Following that, she,

"Yoh."

She uttered as she clambered up to the top of the stone wall.

And she said.

"Well well ~. Somehow, after following the severed head monster-kun here, I got hold of some incredible scoop, it seems. Isn't this awesome? Awesome right? Well, anyhow, I've got to let Gekkou know."

On saying that, she got off the wall with a thud. She fell.

"Ouch ~."

As she was uttering that, she broke off into a run.

And that wooded path became devoid of all life.

But, nevertheless, that had already begun.

The prophecy of the **Church**, the many complex entanglements of their fates, the entire story had already begun.

Slowly.

Quietly.

With the crossing of the many threads, the story started progressing towards its end.

Chapter 3 - Gekkou's Lightning

Two hours later.

At the school where the gates were already closed, and neither the students nor teachers, nor anyone else were present.

"Kiss me!"

A girl said.

However, without looking up from the book he was reading,

"Shut up."

Gekkou muttered.

With jet black hair at the stand up collar of his school uniform. His rational black eyes in which a quiet light was embedded were merely cruising along the words in the book in his hands.

The girl further went on to say.

"Huh? Shut up? What do you mean by 'shut up'?"

However, in response to that.

"....."

Without a single word, Gekkou ignored her.

"Wa, wait! Are you listening to me!?"

"....."

"Quickly kiss me!"

"....."

"I'm telling you to kiss me!"

"....."

"Uhn nowwwww! Quuiicckkllyyyyy! Quick quickk! Otherwise I'm going to die! If you don't kiss me, I will die!"

At the excessively noisy annoyance, Gekkou finally looked up.

Fed-up, he looked in front of him.

The place where a girl was hollering, *kiss me, kiss me*, was a suspicious --- no; it was just a usual, ordinary student council room in an ordinary school.

Miyasaka High's central premises, in the corner of the fifth floor, the student council room.

Containing a somewhat untidy document shelf, a whiteboard, an long oblong meeting desk, and such. And at one end of that meeting desk, in the seat of the student council president, Gekkou calmly sat.

He had just entered this high school two months ago. After graduating from junior high, on debuting at the high school at an ignorant age of sixteen, how did he end up as the student council president? Regarding that, let's ignore it for now. For a certain Miyasaka High which was strange in various ways, such a thing was not that unusual.

Now, more importantly than that,

"Kiss me please."

He seemed about to turn his face to that heartrending, cornered voice of a girl,

"..... hn."

But, it seemed like the contents in the book that he was reading were about to become interesting, for now, he took a sip of the red tea placed in front of him, and once again let his sight fall onto the pages ---

"Huh, why are you ignoring meeeeeeeee!?"

Once again, a loud voice rang out.

"Now, Gekkou! Didn't I tell you to quickly kiss me! I'm dying, you know! I'm really dying, you know ~!"

A girl causing an uproar in the student council room. This time round, he really turned to face that voice.

Following his sight along the direction of the meeting desk.

A single girl ---

"Argghhhhhhhhh, I can't take it, I'm dying, I'm going to die, I'm seriously dyinggggggggggggg!?"

She hollered.

A short, young girl. With a well featured face with a slight hint of childishness, gentle looking eyes, and a long ponytail.

However, those lovely calm eyes, were now colored with anger, and were fixing a glare onto Gekkou.

Andou Mirai --- that is her name.

In a navy blue pleated skirt and sailor uniform, a high school girl with nothing unusual. No matter how you look at it, she's just a normal, regular, somewhat short, high school girl.

However.

The girl called Mirai who was now before Gekkou's eyes, was not just any high school girl,

"I'm dyingggggggggggggg, seriously dyingggggggggggggggggggggggggggg!?"

She was a somewhat strange girl.

For some reason, with both her hands, she was now pushing against the wall of the student council room. Frantically pushing against it. Even if one looks at that

figure from the side, it would be an incomprehensible scene. Her cute face which looked strained only increased the bizarreness by five times.

But despite that, even as she was saying *I'm dying, I'm dying*, she continued to push against the wall desperately . And then, with both her hands continuing to press against the wall, she turned her face towards Gekkou, and with a face on the verge of crying,

"Nowww Gekkou, I'm begging you, so kiss me please. If not, I'll..... I'll..... really die, you know?"

Saying that, she continued badgering for a kiss.

With tearful eyes on her bishoujo's well featured face. Because of her short stature, more than usual, she resembled a child and won't kissing her feel somewhat like a crime? Even if one feels guilty of a crime, so as to speak, for a bishoujo of her level to ask for a kiss, there probably isn't any man who would be able to refuse that kind of invitation.

That's why Gekkou replied.

To her invitation.

To her invitation to kiss her, he replied in earnest.

He looked at her intently with a serious gaze, and with one line.

Gekkou said.

"..... shut up, small fry."

Instantly, Mirai's face froze. She froze at the unexpected answer.

Following that immediately, her face turned red with anger,

"Who, who are you calling small fryyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!?"

"You."

"I'm no small fryyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!?"

"Haha. Howling just like a weakling dog."

"Thisssssss..... this, this guy..... really....."

But, Mirai's words stopped there. All of a sudden, her face contorted in pain,

"Ah, this is bad....."

Her whole body shivered.

As if she was exhibiting some kind of withdrawal symptoms, beads of sweat formed on her entire body.

"Uwah..... Ge, Gekkou..... I'm begging you..... please don't torment me any more than this..... I really can't take it any more than this....."

"....."

"So..... I'm begging you, so..... kiss....."

She said with a face that was on the verge of crying. She said with a face that appeared to be in misery.

Kiss me.

She had said in the student council room where only the two of them were present, during the hours after school.

Kiss me please.

She had said while pressing her hands in desperation against the wall.

That was really something incomprehensible.

Of course, even if the reason was not clear, it was still possible to kiss her. She's a bishoujo, and to kiss that bishoujo in the first trimester of the freshman year. If that were to happen, what would follow would be a rose-colored summer vacation, a development which could possibly unfold.

But.

"....."

That kind of story would never happen.

Gekkou knew that.

That kind of plot would never unfold.

Gekkou knew that.

That's why he stood up. Then he snapped close the book that he was reading and placed it beside the red tea. And with a cold pair of eyes, he looked in the direction of Mirai.

He faced the high school girl who was pressing her hands against the wall, and had been making a face that was on the verge of crying while she pleaded for him to kiss her, and who now looked like an uncertain lump of mass.

And then he said.

"Do you want me to save you?"

"Yes."

Mirai gave two sharp nods in response.

"Quickly kiss me!"

She forced the words out.

On hearing that, Gekkou,

"....."

Exasperation born from the depths of his heart appearing on his face, he said.

"..... this is really the worst plot. A shitty plot."

After saying that, he looked at the cover sheet of the bundle of documents currently placed on the desk before his eyes.

It was a copy of the directive documents that were just created secretly by this school from a collection of various intelligence.

Rather.

"....."

It was the organization that was behind the school.

This ordinary looking Miyasaka High in this provincial city, which appeared to be nothing unusual from outside, was a front for a military organization that was conducting ongoing, worthless experiments; it was this organization that had created these directive documents assembled from various intelligence, and it was a copy of these documents that lay before his eyes.

He looked at the cover of these documents.

With piercing eyes, Gekkou looked at the cover of these documents.

This was what writtten there.

<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >> *Saitohimea*.

<< S-a-c-r-i-f-i-c-e >> *Kurogane Taito*.

And Regarding Kurenai Gekkou.

Looking at that.

Looking at that cover of the documents,

"..... jeez. Why did my name appear in the military's investigation documents at this kind of timing?"

Gekkou said in a groaning tone.

Even though he didn't want to stand out if possible at all. Even though he didn't want to stand out before things happen. However, this shitty plot didn't seem to be advancing in that direction. Thinking about that,

"....."

Gekkou scowled.

And then he looked at that girl who had been clamoring, *kiss me, kiss me*, and who was now pressing her hands against the wall.

Looking at her figure.

Following that,

"....."

His thoughts stirred.

From within his memories.

From an old scene.

The story of how everything had begun started reeling in. The start of something in which he had expected himself to get involved with several troublesome matters, but somehow things just didn't go the way he had thought it would,

"The start of this shitty story....."

As he muttered, he recalled everything.

It was a story that had happened just before the point where he first met Mirai.

No, on that day.

On that day, Mirai, so as to speak ---

It was a story that had happened just before the point where he first met that, which was, from head to toe, an enigmatic monster, Mirai.

♦
♦
♦

I think let's first go back right to the true start of the story.

Of course, with my memory in fragments, to be able to remember everything precisely is quite a tall order. But still, I don't think I will ever be able to forget the memory regarding that day. The day where everything took a hundred and eighty degree turn.

That day started like any other.

I woke up in the morning, went to elementary school, attended classes, passed the day without talking to anyone, and then came home.

I didn't have a single friend, and that's how my day repeats itself everyday.

Not having a common topic with anyone, not having a common view with anyone, and not sharing a common perspective of this world with anyone.

"A true genius will be in isolation in the end."

I just happened to see that documented in some book, though I think it's probably true.

I was born a genius.

Ever since I was born, I have held a view of the world differing from others. I realized that around the age of four. After realizing that, my heart was filled with an immense amount of loneliness.

I couldn't connect with anyone else.

Be it with friends or parents, I don't feel like talking to anyone else.

I could only see everything as foolish. I could only see everyone as a fool.

All this while, the world was shrouded in a shades of gray.

That's why the only time when the void in my heart could be filled, when I could have a conversation, was the time when I talked to my younger twin brother. The only time when I was with my little brother, Kurenai Hinata.

Since we are identical twins, we really look the same. Black hair, black eyes, the same height, the inside of our heads, and even the loneliness we bore as well.

The two of us, having seen too much of the world at an early age, were in return isolated from the world, and could only shake in loneliness. That's this world only consisted of myself

and my little brother. We have to live our lives depending only on each other.

But that was what I thought.

Gekkou and Hinata.

Night and day.

We would end up becoming broken if we didn't stay with each other, that was what I believed.

But --- that was a big misunderstanding.

A misunderstanding by the foolish me.

My little brother was more of a genius than me.

He carried a much deeper despair than me.

That's why on that day.

What must happen had happened.

What had happened made me realize that I'm in truth a fool who had mistakenly thought that he could see everything.

That day. A day that had started like any other day.

I woke up in the morning, went to school, attended classes, passed the day without talking to anyone, and then came home and saw ---

My parents were killed.

In the living room just to the right of the door.

Two strange looking monsters, which at the time I knew not what they were, were devouring my dad and mom.

"....."

On seeing that, not a single sound came from me. No, before my very eyes, I couldn't understand what had happened. Because it shouldn't have been the case. Such a thing couldn't possibly have happened.

Two strange looking monsters, like those from movies and manga, were in my house.

With bodies that seem to be three times as large as an adult. With red eyes and two horns each. Jet black skin and a tail like

that of a lizard. Sprouting two bat like wings from their backs, they just clearly resembled that.

Demons.

They had the appearances of demons that had come out of worthless fairy tails and were used to dupe kids.

Those apparent demons were devouring my parents.

Those apparent monsters were devouring my parents.

And standing between the demons was my little brother.

"..... Hi, Hinata."

With an idiotic-sounding voice, I called my little brother's name.

On hearing that, he turned around to face me. Possessing the same hair, eyes, and face that should have been the splitting image of me, but yet, a rational smile floated on the face of my little brother, who had turned around to face me.

"Yah, Nii-san, you're early."

"What the hell..... did you do?"

I asked.

Right now, it was as if I couldn't comprehend anything that had happened.

My parents were devoured. And they were devoured by something which should not have been in existence, monsters that resembled demons. There was not a trace of blood. It was as if the existences of my parents themselves that had been devoured, as their forms seemed to become increasingly transparent as the demons were chewing on them.

A bizarre scene. That was a truly bizarre scene.

What the hell...what the hell had happened here?

Hinata then said delightedly.

"It's something that Nii-san can't understand."

Indeed, I could not understand. That was no way I could have understood such a scene.

"..... is Nii-san able to see this?"

As Hinata said that, he raised a single finger. And pointed to mid-air.

"....."

But there was nothing there. I could not see anything there.

"What the hell are you really....."

As I said that, with a lonely expression, with a sad expression, from where he was standing ---

He made a face that appeared to be looking down on me.

Looking at that, my words stopped.

Looking at that, my movements stopped.

And I understood immediately.

Ahh, this fellow could see something that I couldn't see. He was looking at something that I couldn't understand. In spite

of having thought that we both possessed the same abilities, and carried the same solitude, Hinata shouldered a far greater darkness than me; that was what I had understood.

Hinata looked at me. With a lonely expression, with a sad expression, but yet, a mocking smile floated on his face.

"..... if you can't see it..... then there's nothing more I need from Nii-san."

That's what he said.

Then, he touched the leg of the demon that was devouring our parents. Before I knew it, the figures of my parents had completely disappeared. Completely devoured. Their entire existence was completely devoured.

The demon carried Hinata and put him on its back.

"Well then, I have to get going. Using our parents as sacrifices, I've made a nine year ***<< contract >>*** *, and because of that, it seems like I will be able to go on a faraway journey."*

While saying that, the demons spread their wings. They intended to take off. From the cramped living room where a ceiling existed, I knew not how and to where they intend to fly off to, but yet, it seemed they intended to fly off to somewhere.

That's why I,

"Wait....."

But, my little brother interrupted me again.

"I won't wait. But, after nine years have passed, I'll return. Since I will need a sacrifice for the next ***<< contract >>*** *. That's why for another nine years. I shall let Nii-san live. To be devoured by the demon nine years later....."*

At that moment, the demons flapped their wings. My little brother and the demons rose up a little, and seemed about to disappear.

Just a moment before disappearing, Hinata said.

"That's why for those nine years, please enjoy yourself."

Then, promptly.

"....."

Hinata disappeared.

The demons also disappeared.

My parents were also no longer there.

I'm all alone.

"....."

I stood alone shocked, in the center of the living room, having lost everything.

I couldn't comprehend what all that was about.

I couldn't do anything at all at the time when everything was taking place.

The demons devoured my parents.

My little brother disappeared.

During all that time, I couldn't do anything but stand there in shock.

I felt a deep sense of despair. I felt an intense pain. Even though I had thought myself to be a genius, but yet, I could not even comprehend half of what my little brother had said.

My little brother had talked about ***<< sacrifice >>*** *.*

But a sacrifice to who? To that demon? Or was it a sacrifice to something else?

My little brother had talked about ***<< contract >>*** *.*

But a contract with who? With that demon? Or was it a contract with something else?

There were a ton of things that I didn't understand.

"....."

But there was something I did know. There was only one thing that I did know. That was the knowledge of me only having nine years to live.

Right now, I'm seven years old. I could only live until nine years later, the age of sixteen.

Since my little brother will bring the demons to come kill me , I could only live until sixteen.

Thinking about that.

"....."

I looked at the cheap-looking digital clock that was placed above the TV in the corner of the living room.

The time was 5:27, 30 seconds, 31 seconds, 32 seconds.....

Moment by moment, the time advanced.

Even though that much had happened, appearing unconcerned by all that, in an uninterested manner, the numbers advanced.

"....."

The amount of time I have to live, was gradually, gradually, decreasing.

Looking at that. Looking vacantly at that digital clock glowing in the dark room.

"..... uwah....."

For the first time, I shivered.

Too many abnormal things had happened at the same time, and the emotion of fear that was paralyzed came spewing out in one shot.

"..... uuu....."

I felt like crying. But no tears came. I felt like hollering. But no voice came. I only shivered. Filled with fear and despair, I only shivered.

Since I've lost everything too quickly in a flash, since I've lost anything and everything, right now, I could no longer think.

But yet, during that time, the digital clock continued advancing.

My remaining life continued ticking away.

Even if I cried, even if I was dumbstruck, even if I shivered, even if I came to a standstill.

Gradually, gradually, my remaining life ticked away.

"..... what, what should I do?"

In the dark room, my feeble voice reverberated.

"..... I don't want to die."

In a room without anyone else, my shaking voice reverberated.

"..... what in the world should I....."

What in the world should I do?

In the house where everything was gone, I mumbled to myself.

But there was no answer. There was no one who could answer me.

With both parents dead, and the disappearance of my little brother whom I had once thought as the only person I could connect with.

"....."

That's why I shivered all by myself.

Feeling the fear of death, I shivered.

Feeling the fear of the monster that would one day appear to take my life.

And then.

While shivering in fear of death, the nine years passed in the blink of an eye, and the appointed day came upon me.

♦♦♦♦

Deep into the night.

"....."

Kurenai Gekkou awoke with a start.

He was now in the house where that incident took place nine years ago.

Before he turned sixteen, he had been putting up at his uncle's place, and as he had decided to advance to that **<< Miyasaka High >>** in April, he took the opportunity to return to that house which he and his parents and his little brother Hinata had formerly lived in.

In his room on the second floor of the house which was much too large for a single person. In the room he used to stay with his little brother, but now he had it all to himself.

In that room which was six tatami units in size, were a bed, a study desk for children, and a bookshelf. With a blue curtain, decorated with a number of childish automobile drawings, that was chosen by his dead mother, and an electric light that was not working.

If he were to continue to live here, he had to get a new desk. And with regards to the illuminating devices, while the one in the living room had been changed, he still had to take care of the one in his room. Perhaps, he would change it tomorrow, he thought.

If tomorrow.

"....."

If there was a tomorrow.

Thinking about that, Gekkou gazed at the ceiling. And he thought back on the nine years that had passed since that incident.

These nine years.

Looking back at these nine years, he realized that he had been living in fear all this time.

While shaking in fear at knowing what little of his life was remaining. While shaking in fear at the inevitable doom that seemed to be drawing closer rapidly, in spite of that, Gekkou struggled to live. More than anyone else, he accumulated knowledge, more than anyone else, he became stronger and moved forward.

But still, his fear did not vanish.

All these nine years, he could only continue shaking in fear, and had never smiled even for a single day.

That was an unbelievable kind of solitude.

That was an extreme deep despair.

Day by day, filled with agony.

Many a time, he had awoken in the middle of the night .

Many a time, he had awoken from a nightmare of seeing himself killed and devoured by a demon.

Many a time, he had awoken from a dream of seeing his little brother laughing.

"....."

It was like hell. An endless hell. A hell where he thought he would rather die before his brother appeared before him.

And today, he awoke as well.

He awoke, with a most dreadful kind of sensation, from a nightmare in which he was killed by a demon.

And as he did so, in that room which no one.

In that room which no one else should have been present since that day when the incident had happened, all of a sudden ---

A *koton (sfx)* sound was heard.

"....."

With that alone, Gekkou knew what was about to transpire right here, right now.

Rather, he had been waiting all along for this very day.

The day which he would be killed.

The day which a demon would come to kill him.

That's why he had chosen to live alone. He could not afford to bring any further trouble to his uncle, and as such, he forcefully brought himself here to this house.

And tonight just happened to be the night nine years from that very day. It was just the night that was nine years from that very day in which his parents and little brother were no longer around, a day in which he had lost everything.

Gekkou closed his eyes once, then opened them again. He sat up and looked towards the direction from where the sound had come.

That was in the direction of the window of this room.

He could see the blue curtain being parted slowly.

And then, the figure of the monster Gekkou had been fearing all this while was standing right there.

The figure of despair was there.

At last, the demon had come to kill Gekkou.

The curtain was parted. The window was open as well. And he could see a single monster squatting on the railing of the balcony beyond the window.

"....."

The monster was in the form of a short girl.

And it was a pretty cute girl.

But it was clear that she was no human. With calm golden eyes, and brilliant, angular golden hair scattered out around her. Even though she was not wearing any clothes, her short body was wrapped by a vortex of lightning, which was giving off crackling sounds.

The golden eyes of that lightning girl was gazing at him.

And she said.

"..... are you Gekkou?"

He nodded.

"So, are you the demon sent by Hinata?"

"That's right."

"You've come to kill me?"

"Nope, I've come here to devour you. Since Hinata has offered you as a **<< sacrifice >>** to me. That's why your life belongs to me."

The lightning girl puffed out her chest and said happily.

*--- since Hinata has offered you as a **<< sacrifice >>** to me.*

That's what she had said. As expected, she indeed was sent by Hinata.

She further went on.

"You are my first **<< sacrifice >>**. After devouring you, my thunder[7] powers will become much greater."

As if to show her small body becoming big, she stood up. At the same time she did that, her surrounding lightning scattered. Just that alone sliced the window apart and scorched the curtain.

Clearly not a human being, she was wielding an unnatural power.

Clearly not a human being, she was wielding an unnatural power.

Gekkou looked at it absentmindedly.

"..... awesome."

He murmured, and the lightning girl, once again, smiled happily.

"Awesome right!"

She puffed out her chest and more lightning dispersed.

Gekkou nodded in agreement.

"It's awesome indeed."

"Are you prepared!"

"Prepared? Yeah, right..... so as to speak, since a long time ago, I've already prepared myself for death."

Gekkou acknowledged.

"....."

For the first time in nine years, a small smile surfaced on his lips.

Following that, he quietly stretched his hand into a crevice at the side of his bed. And he pulled out a single, sharp, pointed, sword that he had prepared long ago.

It was a slender, long sword.

With a jet black blade that has no edge, forged purely to be used for thrusting. Adorned with a simple bell guard that was shaped like the crescent moon.

So as to speak, it was a weapon that resembled an epee rapier used for fencing.

But it was different from an epee.

It was different from a rapier.

No, to begin with.

"....."

To begin with, it was not a weapon forged to be used by a human.

Gekkou gripped the sword with his right hand.

He gripped it strongly.

And he said delightedly.

"Ahh jeez..... you've come at last. This day has finally come. I'm getting tired of waiting."

With that, he stood up.

And raised his sword.

On seeing that, the lightning girl laughed.

"Haha. What's that? What are you planning to do? If you think that's going to have an effect on me....."

But, Gekkou didn't wait for her to finish.

He stepped forward with his right foot.

He put in his strength into that step.

He took a large stride.

The lightning girl, surprised, attempted to dodge, but he wouldn't let her. He wouldn't let her dodge. Since he had long awaited for this day. All this while, he had been living in fear, in fear, in fear, and as he got sick of the fear , irritation came, *don't mess with me, don't kid me, that damn Hinata, as a younger brother, who does he think he is, well fine, let's fight it out, when your demon comes, I'll be the one to kick its ass*, and all this while, all this while, he had continued accumulating power.

"....."

And then the weapon for that purpose was decided right away.

A light, pointed weapon that could be used to deal with any situation. He swore that he would get his hands on a weapon that could slay demons, no, a weapon that could even slay gods.

And in order to wield such a weapon, he trained.

By the time he ascended to middle school, there was no longer anyone of the middle school level who was of a match for him.

But still, he thought that it wasn't enough. He still had a long way to go, he thought. The reason was because his opponent was not a human. Since it would be an unimaginable supernatural monster from an alternate dimension.

But, regarding that,

"Haha. Foolish damn human. The likes of you will get toasted readily by my lightning!"

As the lightning girl said that, she waved her hand. And a part of the lightning wrapping her split off and came assaulting Gekkou.

But ---

"Exorcise, Spell Error **Wicked Blade**[8]"

Gekkou called out the name of his sword, and brushed off the lightning with it. The lightning got mowed down by the black blade of the sword and disappeared.

On seeing that.

"Eehh!?"

The expression of the lightning girl changed. She looked at Gekkou with an astonished face.

But Gekkou did not stop. Drawing back his sword, with that, towards the chest of the lightning girl,

"Wait, wait a minute!? That's so unfair!! Timeout! Wait, time....."

But Gekkou, not complying,

"Shut up, small fry."

He thrust **Spell Error Wicked Blade** into the small chest of the lightning girl.

Instantly.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!?"

The lightning girl cried out in agony.

But Gekkou, without slowing down, drove the sword deeper. Consequently, the body of the lightning girl was pushed down and pinned to the ground with the sword.

The girl's face contorted in fear.

Looking at that face, Gekkou sneered.

"So, who is devouring who?"

On hearing that, the girl glowered at Gekkou,

"For, for a lowly human..... go! Lightning!"

As she said that, she put forth her hand as if to fire something. But nothing came out. More than just that,

the vortex of lightning that was wrapping around her a while ago had all but vanished.

Realizing that, once again, with a surprised look, the young girl,

"Wh, why!? Why didn't my power come forth!?"

She yelled. And then, her gentle looking eyes started filling up with fear and tears,

"You, you, what the hell did you do to me?"

But Gekkou did not reply to her question.

With his sword piercing through the lightning girl, he had already lost interest in her.

He looked up and examined the surroundings of the balcony.

The night was a very clear night. Both the moon and the stars were clearly visible. But that was all he could see. The only things present were the quiet residential neighbourhood and the illumination from the moon.

There was no other demon.

There was no sign of Hinata.

It seemed like the lightning girl was the only one who came to kill him.

"..... what's this. Did I become a little too powerful?"

Gekkou said with an exasperated voice.

In fear. He had been living in fear of genius little brother who was smarter than him.

"..... haha. It seems like I've grown beyond the expectations of Hinata."

He said with a slight sense of satisfaction in his tone, and looked down again. Looking at the figure of the lightning girl whom he had defeated.

No, she was no longer a lightning girl. Her powers were currently sealed by **Spell Error** **Wicked Blade**. That's why she had lost her lightning powers. The lightning that was wrapping around her body had vanished, her hair and eyes had turned to a normal black, making her look no different from an ordinary person.

What lay at his feet was no longer a lightning girl, but an ordinary, short, and somewhat cute stark naked young girl.

"Wait, my lightning has disappeared, I'm nakedddddddddddddddddddd!?"

She shouted at this late juncture.

She frantically tried to cover her flat chest, and with blushing cheeks, glared at Gekkou,

"E, ecchi! Sukebe! Hentai!"

She said, but Gekkou couldn't be bothered by that. There was only one thing he wanted to know.

"..... hey brat. I've a question."

"I'm not a bratttttttttttttttttttttttttttt!"

"Whatever, just answer."

"I'm not a brat duh! I'm already fourteen, you know! That's an adult by demon standards....."

"Annoying."

As he said that, Gekkou went on to apply a stronger pushing force to his sword.

And her face contorted,

"Arggghhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!?"

"Of course. You're feeling pain. However, I can further increase this pain by two thousand four hundred times stronger. If you don't answer me promptly, I'll just keep on increasing the level of pain, got it?"

On hearing those words.

"Uwu ~!?"

Frightened to the verge of tears, she glared at Gekkou and said.

"Damn demon!"

"You are the one who's a demon though."

"Then, you meanie!"

"Wrong. I'm a genius."

"Eh?"

"That's enough, just shut up and answer me. Among the demons employed by Hinata, are you on the strong side, or the weak side?"

Depending on the answer to this question, there might still be a ton of things he needed to do. If she was a weak one, then, he would need to prepare for the next demonic assault. However, if this brat was considered strong at this level, then, there was no longer a need to do anything.

He merely needed to smile and say to Hinata when he appears. He merely need to say those words which had been tossing in his mind during these nine years.

"..... you know, Hinata. In the end, I'm a notch above you, isn't it? Hahaha."

As Gekkou was thinking about these words, a slight smile seemed about to surface on his lips.

But that smile didn't surface. It's not yet time for that. Right now, there was still something that needed to be done.

As he pushed on the sword through the young girl's chest, he continued.

"Now, answer me. Are you strong, or weak?"

"I, I'm an ultra strong kid who didn't even cry when I fell down, my Mama had said....."

"I didn't ask about thatttttttttttttttttttttttttttttt!"

"Yikesssssssssssssssss! Ouch ouch!"

"Answer me properly to match my question. Got it? I'm asking you, among the demons Hinata is keeping, are you strong? Or weak?"

On hearing those words.

"....."

The young girl became flustered.

On seeing that, Gekkou immediately,

"So that's it. In the end, you're just a small fry."

"That, that's not it! I've only seen Hinata once when I was summoned by his magic formation, so I don't really know anything about him!"

"Then, it means that you hardly know anything about him?"

"Yeah."

"Then, let me rephrase my question. Among demons, are you considered to be strong or a small fry?"

After asking, he thought that it was not really something that needed to be asked. Such a fella couldn't possibly be strong. If a demon possesses power only up to such an extent, then a three year old kid would be able to go to the toilet alone without feeling scared.

It's the end. It's the end of the conversation. What's left was to kill this fella and start preparing for the next assault.....

However, at that moment, the young girl spoke up. In spite of having her powers sealed by the sword piercing through her chest, for some reason, she spoke with a confident smile on her face,

"I'm strong, Gekkou."

That was what she said.

On hearing that, once again, Gekkou looked at her face . Looking intently into her eyes, which were black from the loss of her powers.

"Really? With this level?"

"That, that's..... that's only because I haven't yet formed any contract with anyone, and can't bring forth my full power into this world."

"Really. Then, are you saying that you'll become much stronger after forming a contract?"

Once again, a smile floated on her lips,

"At the very least, I won't be defeated by the likes of you! That's because, right now, I'm the only one with the

blood belonging to Andu of Thunder[Indra][9] flowing inside of me!"

She said it with a face brimming with confidence.

Andu of Indra --- Gekkou didn't seem to have any recollection of that name. Indra was the name of some demon lord of thunder[10] from some religion, but as to ' Andol', who's that? No, wait, in the first place, was this the same Indra? Well, no matter, whichever it was --- Gekkou said.

"..... you're trying to form a bargain, aren't you?"

Instantly.

"..... uwu."

She uttered and her face had a nervous look.

Gekkou continued.

"In order not to be slayed by me here, you are trying to portray yourself as a useful, powerful demon....."

But, in response to that,

"It's, it's true that I'm powerful!"

"Liar."

"It's true! Mirai of Andu is pretty famous on the other side!"

That was what she said.

Mirai of Andu.

It seems like Mirai is her name.

Gekkou looked at the lovely face of Mirai.

And said.

"So, you don't want to die?"

She nodded sharply twice.

"And you'll become my slave for that?"

"Sla, slave!? Why should I become something like a slave? Who do you think I am..... ouucchhhhhhhhhhhh!?"

"Whatever, just answer me. If you form a contract with me, will you be able to repel the demons sent by Hinata?"

At that question, while looking intently at the sword protruding from her chest with hateful eyes, Mirai replied.

"After, after the contract is formed, I won't lose to anyone. That includes you."

She looked up, and glowered bitterly at Gekkou.

A smile then surfaced on Gekkou's face,

"I see. Then, let it be so. I shall let you live. And we shall form a contract."

"Real, really!?"

"Really."

"Well then, you will be offering a **<< sacrifice >>** to me ?"

"Yeah. I'll do that."

As he was saying that, Gekkou recalled the information he had gathered during these nine years, regarding the contract with demons.

<< Demons and Contracts >>

That is something established when a human offers something precious to himself to the demon as a **<< sacrifice >>**.

On doing that, the demon will devour the **<< sacrifce >>**, acquire power, and will be able to employ this power for the contractor in this world.

However, in most cases, humans hold nothing more precious than themselves, and because of that, one usually ends up offering his soul to the demon to establish the contract.

But, it was an exceptional case with Hinata.

Their parents were actually more precious to him than himself ---

And me as well.

"....."

He also thought of me as something precious.

What an irony, Gekkou thought.

Even after nine years, that had not changed.

Even now, Hinata loved his twin brother Gekkou, that's why he had chosen him as the **<< sacrifice >>** for the demon.

That's why the demon came here.

That's why Mirai came here.

At that moment,

"Well then, quickly take out the **<< sacrifice >>**! Take out the thing that's precious to you! Form a contract with me! After the contract is formed, I won't lose to anyone."

Mirai rambled to him.

While he had tried researching for the literature that document the benefits acquired by a demon after the contract, it was to no avail, but seeing how happy she was, there must be some tremendous benefits, it seemed.

"Well, let's form a contract then."

"Let's do it! Hurry up! So, what would it be? What would you be offering? Your own soul? Or a the life of a beloved kin? What in the world is precious to you?"

On hearing that question, Gekkou considered.

A thing that was precious to him. Something that was precious to him. There were several of them. There were several things he didn't want to let go.

"Hurry up and tell me. Tell me what's most precious to you. Tell me and form a contract with me."

Mirai said. She said it with a face full of excitement and enthusiasm.

And Gekkou began,

"The thing that's precious to me....."

"Uhn."

"My precious thing....."

And then Gekkou answered.

"It's you..... Mirai."

On hearing that, she nodded and acknowledged loudly,

"Alright! Then, I'm going to receive that as a **<< sacrifice >>**..... wait, eh? What did you just say ?"

"As I was saying, it's you."

On hearing Gekkou's proclamation, Mirai's face turned into one of surprise, then all of a sudden, as if she just had a sudden thought, her face blushed in embarrassment,

"Eh? Eh? Eh? What, what do you mean what do you mean? Ermm, does that mean that Gekkou is in lov....."

Immediately,

"Don't get conceited, stupid brat."

"Don't call me stupid bratttttttttttttttttttttttttttttttttttt!? Then, then, what do you mean by that! Aren't you forming a contract with me?"

"Yes, I am."

"Then, hurry up and tell me what you value most."

"As I've said, it's you."

"That's why I'm asking why meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!? Gekkou is forming a contract with me right? Then what's the meaning of making me the **<< sacrifice >>**!? I can't figure this out!"

She was already yelling with a bewildered expression, but unbothered by this, Gekkou just spoke with an indifferent tone.

"The fact that you don't get it makes you stupid. Try considering the current situation. Who is the one currently about to be killed? You, isn't it? Then, the one who should be pleading for your life is you, right? That's why I'm selling it to you. Right now, I'm selling you your own life which could be snuffed out in an instant. You should just buy it and form a contract with me."

On hearing that, this time round, it's Mirai's turn to make a *Is this guy an idiot* face,

"There's no way you can rationalize in such a manner to forcibly form such an unreasonable contract, right! The rules bounding a contract are pretty strict, you know! If you don't offer something that is truly precious to you and form a contract properly....."

But, at that moment, Gekkou said.

Gazing at Mirai with an earnest face.

"I truly see you as something precious to me, you know."

He said.

On hearing that, for some reason, Mirai once again adopted a somewhat troubled, somewhat surprised, somewhat embarrassed expression,

"That, that, that's why, as I was saying, how can you say that with such a serious expression!? That couldn't be possible right! Didn't I only just meet Gekkou, so how in the world did I become someone precious to Gekkou!?"

However, the answer to that was exceedingly simple.

"That would only hold if you really are strong. It's because you've told me that you're capable of repelling the demons that Hinata would send. If that's the truth, then you are something precious to me. If you can truly be of help to me, as a useful slave, I see you as something very precious to me."

On hearing those words that were overflowing with love, Mirai,

"Don't shit around with meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!?"

She hollered.

But that was totally meaningless.

Since she didn't have any choice in the matter.

Gekkou looked down on her.

"Either way is fine with me. If you're not forming a contract with me, I'll just kill you here. Now, hurry up and choose. Which do you want? To live and become my slave? Or to die here in solitude?"

Killing her was a simple matter. This sword was made for this kind of purpose.

In response to that.

"....."

Mirai glowered at Gekkou. *Uwuu ~*, even as she moaned, she glowered at him with a face on the verge of crying. And then, she said.

"Such, such an unreasonable contract won't take place. It won't go well if you don't offer what's precious to you as the **<< sacrifice >>**. If it doesn't go well --- a demon who devours a fake **<< sacrifice >>** will die, you know?"

But, promptly,

"Then die."

"Uwuu ~"

"Since either way you're going to die, then there's nothing to feel troubled about right?"

"Uwuuu ~"

"However, at the very least, I would think it's worth a try. I'm not lying when I said that you are precious to me. "

"Liar."

"It's not a lie. If truly, you are really useful in helping me kill my little brother --- that is kill Hinata, to me, you are more important than my life."

That's what Gekkou said.

And that was not necessarily a lie.

Since that was the only thing he could think about during these nine years. Since, during these nine years in which he lived through, he was always only thinking about how to deal a blow to the little brother who would once again appear before him.

"Quick, make your choice. To die? Or to form a contract with me? The **<< sacrifice >>** is your own life. Now, which one will you choose?"

Hearing those words, Mirai still pondered for a little while,

"Geez, why is my first contractor such a bothersome fella....."

She said dejectedly. And with a resigned look on her face, she looked up at him.

"But..... but, alright. I get it. Then let's try to form the contract....."

"Are you resolved on this?"

"But, I don't have any other choice right!"

"That's right."

"Then I just have to do it right!"

"That's right."

"Idiot!!"

Mirai yelled in a half-crying tone.

But it didn't matter. Gekkou put out his left hand.

"Hurry up and get on with it."

"Uwuu..... why is this guy, this guy acting high and mighty? Even though I'm such an awesome demon....."

While saying that, she put out her hand. And clasped Gekkou's hand. Following that, she had a slightly frightened expression.

"I, I..... might just die here, you know."

"....."

"If I'm not really something precious to Gekkou, I might just be split apart and die, you know."

"....."

"You're lying right ~. It can't be. There's no way such a thing can be possible. Uwuuuuuu I'm scared."

"Whatever, just hurry up and do it."

"Uwuuuuuu."

"Or, I'll just kill you."

As he said that, he seemed about to put in more force into his sword.

"Uwuuu wait. I get it. I'll just get on with it. Well then, you're sure? You truly think of me as something important?"

"Yeah."

"Really?"

"Yeah, hurry up and get on with it."

"Uwuuu this guy definitely thinks otherwise ~"

While saying that with a face on the verge of crying, she gripped Gekkou's hand tightly.

"I'm going to establish the contract ok?"

"Yeah."

"Uweh ~ I'm so scared, terribly scared..... but..... but I don't want to die..... uwuuuuuu, here goes, oryah!"

As she said that, she closed her eyes. Her entire body then gave off a blue black light and following that, directed through their hands, it moved towards Gekkou.

And then the light ran about his body, seemingly searching for something within him. And following that, the light once again returned to Mirai. From Gekkou's left hand, to Mirai's right hand. And then it ran through her arm, her shoulder, her head, and finally to her left chest, at the place where the heart is located, the light vanished.

And then.

"....."

"....."

At that moment, Mirai opened her eyes. And with a shaking voice, she said.

"I, I didn't die?"

"Seems so. Is the contract established?"

"Uhn, yeah."

"So you didn't die."

"Yeah. Wait, this feels unreal..... so Gekkou truly thought of me as something precious to him."

"As a useful slave, yeah."

But, somehow.

"....."

Somehow, Mirai did not rebuke that. With a strangely embarrassed looking red face, her eyes shifting restlessly as if she was some kind of a suspicious person, she averted her gaze.

But, Gekkou had not the slightest interest in those things. There was only one thing he was interested in.

"Well then, show me your power. Didn't you say that after forming the contract, I won't be a match for you? Show me that power."

On hearing those words,

"Ah! That's right!"

All of a sudden, she adopted a cocky expression,

"Don't get awestruck after seeing my power, I'm telling you."

"Ha. It would be nice if it's something to get awestruck about."

"These episodic scenes of me getting treated like a fool, shall end here once and for allllllllllllllllllllllllllll!"

As she said that, she grabbed hold of the sword protruding out of her body with both hands. And then,

"Mumumumumumumu ~"

She tried pulling it out.

At the same time, the dispelled lightning that had been wrapping around her previously seemed about to come back to life. Crackle, crackle, crackle, the sound of popping thunder rippled through the air, and her hair and eyes seemed about to be covered with a golden color .

But that was something impossible.

The **Wicked Blade**[Spell Error] that was impaled into her body, should possess the power to suppress all forms of demonic powers.

The sword possesses a hidden great power to seal off whatever kind of demonic powers, no, even powers at the god level --- this was told to him by the previous owner of this sword, a shady-looking, alcoholic Father who was living on top of the mountains of the Principality of Andorra, a remote place of Europe.

However, this fella seemed about to pull it out.

"Muu ~ orrhhhhhhhhhhhhh ~!"

Forcibly trying to pull it out.

Her both hands were wrapped in lightning as well. As the sword was pulled out little by little, her powers seemed to return gradually, the lightning that was gathering around her became steadily more intense, and it had reached the level that was greater than it was previously.

On seeing that.

"....."

Involuntarily, a smile surfaced on Gekkou's face.

At the thought of what she said might be true, a smile surfaced on Gekkou's face.

A great demon in which flowed the blood belonging to Andu of Indra.

A new demon whom Hinata wanted to make a contract with.

Instead, he had seized her and made her his slave.

He had managed to get the better of him.

Thinking about that.

"Ha, haha."

Gekkou laughed softly.

Appearing to misunderstand that, Mirai glowered at him.

"Laugh while you can! Once I get this strange sword out, I will just kill the crap out of you!"

"Huh? Kill me? Won't that be going back on your contract?"

"As if I care!"

"That would be troubling. For a slave who doesn't know where she stands, some punishment needs to be meted out."

However, in response to that,

"The meanie who should be punished is youuuuuuuuuuuuu!"

As she said that, she pulled on the sword with all her might. If this carried on, it's possible that he would be incinerated by her lightning the moment right after she pulls out that sword.

However.

"I won't allow this."

Gekkou said, and following that, with a soft voice,

"Elu, Eluelut."

He chanted an incantation.

On doing that, the true form of **Spell Error** **Wicked Blade** was revealed. The jet black sword was colored with a bloody red ---

Mirai, looking at that,

"Eh? You, you, what did you do this time....."

As expected, Gekkou ignored her and continued chanting.

"Toris, Elumire."

That curse will take place on delivering a kiss. The person who is impaled by the sword, with the curse placed on him, and then on receiving the kiss, will lose everything.

"....."

Gekkou caught hold of Mirai's hand and pulled it towards him. And with that, he put his lips onto the back of her hand ---

"Wait!? Ehh!? Why are you kissing me all of a sudden!? Isn't that too early....."

At that moment, her words stopped. The instant his lips touched the back of her hand, the curse was activated. The crimson of the blood-colored sword seeped into Mirai's chest.

In a flash.

"Kaha."

She cried out in agony.

Following that, quite visibly, the lightning that had started returning to her body vanished. Her hair and eyes started turning back to black. Even the sword that was about to be pulled out slided back in deeply at the same time she lost her strength.

Completely exhausted, she looked up.

"..... wh, what? What did you do this time?"

She said.

Gekkou replied.

"A curse. In order to keep the noisy brat quiet, I've sealed seventy percent of your power. If you want to use

your full powers again, you will need my permission. If I don't remove the curse through a kiss, your powers won't return."

On hearing those words.

This time round, Mirai said with a truly angry face.

"Wh, wh, wh, why a kiss!?"

"Huh? Is that the place where you're making your comeback?"

"Ehhhhh, isn't that the natural place to make a comeback!? I've heard a lot about such wicked stuff where a curse is placed to manage the demon, so I can put that aside, but why must the curse be lifted through a kiss!?"

"Like hell I know."

"Know it already!"

"It just so happens that this is the way the power is prescribed by the sword, so I don't have a choice in it either."

"Don't dismiss that so easilyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy! Well, you see you see, I'm still that, you know? I'm still only fourteen, you know? I've never kissed before, you know? But yet, I have to kiss..... I have to kiss to get back my powers..... such a thing, such a thing....."

It seemed like she was going to ramble on further, but since it didn't really matter to him at all, Gekkou sighed and stopped listening.

"Listen to meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

There was no real need to listen to her hollers as well.

He pulled out the sword and stood up. Even if he pulled out the sword, her powers were not going to return. Since the curse was already in effect. After ascertaining that her eyes and hair were still black, and that her stark nude body was no longer clad in lightning,

"Uhm."

He acknowledged once and turned on his heel.

And from behind him,

"Don't you 'uhm' meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee! Anyway, why are you leaving me here!? After taking my powers away forcefully, and you're leaving me!?"

At the clamor, Gekkou turned his head around.

"Don't turn your head around!? Sukebe! Hentai!! Right now, I'm nude without my lightning!? Close, close your eyes!!"

"....."

Already feeling vexed, Gekkou.

"Then, what do you want me to do?"

"Wait, just wait a minute. I'm going to wear some clothes."

"Did you bring some?"

"No, I did not!"

"Then, what?"

"Whatever, just close your eyes!! If you open them, next time, I'll call you Sukebeda Erogorou! [11] I'm serious, just you know!"

After she clamored noisily, for some reason, she came into the room.

Gekkou shut his eyes once again.

I wonder whether it's a mistake to form a contract with such a boisterous demon, he thought with just a little, just a little bit of regret.

From within the room, came the noise of someone rummaging through various things. Following that, there was the sound of drawers opening. *What's with this, there's nothing inside!* And an angry yell followed. Next, came the sound of a suitcase opening, the suitcase which Gekkou had brought along when he came back to this house, after a clickety-clack sound of the case opening, *Uwah, isn't everything large!*, such a voice rang out and finally,

"Alright, it's fine now!"

The voice said.

On hearing that, Gekkou opened his eyes.

A single cute girl was standing in that dark room.

With her hair tied up into a ponytail with a hair rubber-band she found somewhere, and wearing Gekkou's white shirt loosely. For some reason, her face seemed to be red with embarrassment. Even with drooping eyes, a strong spirit could be seen from within; they were bleared. *How is it? Does it suit me? Am I cute?*, she seemed to be making such an expression.

From all angles, she looked just like an ordinary girl.

And a pretty cute one at that.

She didn't resemble a demon at all.

She didn't look powerful at all.

Looking at that, Gekkou thought.

He thought from the bottom of his heart.

And he sent out those feelings to her.

"Hm. Since I'm pretty fed-up with your irritating disposition, maybe we should annul the contract....."

"You're a thousand times more irritatinggggggggggggggggggggggggggg!!"

Mirai exclaimed loudly.

And that ---

That was basically how Gekkou met Mirai of Andu --- Andou Mirai.

Since then, the two of them had lived in the same house. On top of that, they went to the same Miyasaka High; with a mere two months elapsing; thus still a story of yesterday.[12]

And once again, Gekkou looked in front of him.

He looked at the usual student council room.

He looked at the student council room of afterschool hours, a time when the school gates were already closed.

The Gekkou who had become the student council president at the age of sixteen.

Looked at the student council room of the mad school that had accepted the fourteen year old girl of unknown nationality, Mirai, as its student.

In that student council room, the Mirai wearing a sailor uniform was yelling. She was yelling while desperately pushing against the wall.

"Uwoooooohhhhhh, it's impossible for me! It's definitely no longer impossible for me, Gekkou! With my powers sealed up, I can't hold out any longer than this! So hurry up and kiss me, and release my powers!"

On hearing that, Gekkou looked at the wall that Mirai was desperately pushing against.

In an instant, 'dokun (sfx)', the wall seemed to become distorted. In a spongy manner, as if there was a warp in dimension, the wall seemed to become distorted.

And in a desperate manner, Mirai,

"Uwah."

And,

"Uhnyaro."

She uttered as she was starting to get overwhelmed.

He could tell that clearly, something irregular was on the other side of the wall and was trying to come over to this side. He could tell something irregular was about to happen in this student council room.

However, in response to that, Gekkou,

"Even without releasing the seal, you should be able to deal with it right? Or what was all that about? *I'm a great demon, you know*, all that dramatic talk was a bluff?"

He said that without moving an inch.

So as to speak, such a thing was an everyday occurrence right here, in this student council room.

A dimensional rift causing the wall to distort.

A strange hole that leads to numerous other worlds.

This was a facility that was established for the purpose of overseeing that. On top of that, only brats who are eighteen and below could come and go through that hole .

That was why this school was constructed.

A school built by the military with the purpose of having kids to oversee the rift while camouflaging it from the eyes of the other countries.

An irregular school built to gather brats with extraordinary power.

Of course, most of the students were not aware of it. No, even teachers were kept in the dark.

The only people who knew this were the military personnel working in the underground facility under this school, and the student council members who were tasked to oversee the rift.

And then, Gekkou beat the previous student council president until he was half dead, and on top of that, he

fired all the useless committee members, and easily took the seat of the student council president. The student council president in this school has absolute authority. More than any student, more than any teacher, an overwhelming amount of authority.

That's a matter of fact. On the other side of the rift, from the other worlds, any discovered power, artifact, or living being, holds the possibility of bringing the might of this country soaring upwards.

And it was the task of the student council to oversee all that.

That's why everyone dreamt of becoming the student council president. Everyone who knew of this, came to this school, and dreamt of becoming the student council president.

All for the sake of attaining fame and position.

But.

"....."

All that meant nothing to Gekkou.

Whatever was happening on the other side of the dimension, whatever the military was planning, why a dimensional rift had appeared here, however much authority a person could acquire on becoming the student council president, all those meant nothing to Gekkou.

What he needed was only power. Nothing mattered to him as long as he could get his hands on the power to kill the Hinata who would appear sometime in the future. And that power seemed to be obtainable here, that's why he came here. That's all there was to it.

At that moment, coming from the other side of the wall that Mirai was pressing against ---

<< Vaaaaaaa -- Va -- Va -- Vaaaaaaaaaaa 1 Aaaa 1 Aaaa 12 Aaa >>

With that ear-splitting howl, a strange monster-like thing was attempting to come over. Somewhat different from a demon, a strange monster was about to come over.

Mirai, in response to that,"Uwuuuuuuuu I can't hold this! I told you I can't hold this anymore, Gekkou! Help me!"

On hearing that, Gekkou,

"That's why small fry are so troublesome."

While saying that, he moved towards Mirai.

And Mirai began,"I'm not a..... small fry."

She said with effort. In the contest of strength against the something that was on the other side of the wall, she was losing.

Following that, Gekkou let out a small sigh, and walked to her back. And then, like a vampire, his lips started closing in on the nape of her neck.

"Then, show me your true power. Show me that you are more vicious than the monster on the other side."

As he said that, he gently touched her.

Gekkou touched the nape of Mirai's neck with his lips.

At that moment.

"..... the curse, is liftedddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddd!!"

Her powers burst forth.

Her hair turned golden, and the lightning bursting forth caused her hair rubber-band to fly into the air.

Piercing golden eyes overflowing with confidence,

"Then, watch me, Gekkou! I shall kill this monster in a flash, and show you how awesome I am, so watch me proper....."

But, by that time, Gekkou had already turned on his heel and was making his way back to his desk,

"Look hereeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!"

With her whole body glowing from the flashes of lightning, the cute demon in sailor uniform hollered.

But he didn't look. There was no need to.

"Whatever, just finish it quickly. In one minute. Once it's over, we're going over to the other side into that dimensional hole. We're going to catch that fool who had sent the monster here --- we're going to catch that Saitohimea."

"That's why, I'm asking you to wait. It's not that, I mean, didn't Gekkou want to see me dispose an awesome looking monster....."

At that moment,

"Uwah, wait, this bastard, it has the balls to attack me while I'm talking..... uwah, this guy's drool, it's acidddddddddd."

And the battle began.

In response to that, he did turn around once. Mirai was fighting a squishy slime-like monster with no physical form that had come flying out of the wall. Her brilliant golden hair, dispersing flashes of lightning, went thrusting towards the monster, and with her fist wrapped in lightning, she went striking the monster in a flashy manner, and on seeing that, Gekkou,

"Hm."

He acknowledged once and sat in his chair. He drank down a mouthful of his red tea, and seemed about to continue reading his book once again, but his eyes fell onto the documents on the table.

<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >> *Saitohimea*.

<< S-a-c-r-i-f-i-c-e >> *Kurogane Taito*.

And Regarding Kurenai Gekkou.

Those words written on the documents.

His eyes fell onto them.

And then he recalled its contents.

It was an intelligence report on the various power factions that had created this distasteful plot which had led to this damn troublesome, roundabout, worst-case situation.

He recalled that. He recalled the contents written inside. And then, he re-enacted it in his mind. And the following is what was written in those documents.

With regards to the **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>** Bahlskra who had created the most distasteful magic, **<< Bliss >>**, and his lover Saitohimea.

With regards to the sealing of Bahlskra, as a result of the betrayal from Saitohimea and several **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>**.

With regards to how Bahlskra, and his former compatriots, Saitohimea and various **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>** had committed sorcery crimes and were wanted criminals pursued by the **Church** of the world.

With regards to how our military, despite the fact that most of the **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>** had hidden their tracks and had managed to escape detection from

the **Church**, had chanced upon and succeeded in discovering the whereabouts of the most important individual among them, Saitohimea, nine years ago.

With regards to how our military succeeded in capturing the Saitohimea who, while on the verge of death, had managed to escape from the clutches of her previous captor, a believer of the Demon God.

By the way, during that time, Saitohimea was raving *Taito Taito* nonsensically while she was crying. And then we conducted numerous experiments on her, but unfortunately, we had judged that there was no longer any shred of power left in her anymore.

Whether it was stolen by the Demon God believer, or it was hidden somewhere, we had judged that she had already lost the powers of one of the most fearsome demons, the powers of a **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>**. If she had hidden it, *Spill out where you've hidden it*, we had repeatedly tortured and grilled her, but she remained tight lipped on it.

She only continued crying about wanting to see Taito.

She only continued crying out nonsense about wanting to see Taito.

She really must have lost her powers, it seems.

We decided to stop the interrogation.

In the end, we found that Taito was actually the name of a young man named Kurogane Taito. We found that it was the name of a young man who was living in the town that was under our jurisdiction. However, somehow, that young man was just an ordinary person with no special ability, merely a child who was good in karate, and thus we judged that there was no need for any further probing. Of course, we still kept him under surveillance, but we had judged that both the names, Saitohimea and Kurogane Taito, were no longer important to the further advancement of our research.

As such, the military considered selling off Saitohimea.

And it was decided that she would be sold off to the

Church that all along has been fearing her master, Bahlskra.

And thus she was sold off at a high price, and imprisoned in another dimension.

Specially prepared by the **Church**, a dimension that has no sound. No light. Anyone who was placed in there would go mad, so as to speak.

Without any power, a magical being being degraded to the level of junk, she probably wouldn't be able to escape from that prison.

This matter came to a close.

And then nine years went by.

Nothing happened in that period.

But a few hours ago.

All of a sudden, an irregularity appeared in that dimension.

The Saitohimea who should no longer possess any form of power suddenly attempted to escape.

She readily crossed a number of dimensions, and consequently, the **Church** having lost her tracks, came to us for help.

At the same time as that.

At the same time when Saitohimea had regained her powers.

Someone penetrated the world in which she should have been imprisoned in.

The request to apprehend this trespasser also came to our military.

According to the intelligence from the **Church**, it was highly probable that this trespasser was a mad Demon God believer who came here to capture Saitohimea and scheming to use her to remove the seal off Bahlskra.

And that single mad Demon God believer who was attempting to revive that monster.

That single mad Demon God believer who was trying to take Saitohimea captive, isn't he Kurenai Gekkou --- the Miyasaka High student council president that your military is keeping?

The **Church** said to us.

"....."

That was what was roughly written in those documents.

And that last part.

Once again, Gekkou flipped through the documents to the very last section.

And this was what was written on it.

That single mad Demon God believer who was trying to take Saitohimea captive, isn't he Kurenai Gekkou --- the Miyasaka

High student council president that your military is keeping? That was told to us by that **Church**, and we shall, with immediate effect, strip Kurenai Gekkou of his position, and mete out his punishment.

He looked at that description.

Kurenai Gekkou looked at that description,

"Hah."

He laughed mockingly.

At the same time.

Don (sfx)!

Such a sound rang out.

On hearing that, he looked to the side. He looked through the small window that was part of the entrance door of the student council room.

Gekkou ascertained that someone was knocking on the small window with the grip of a gun with a *Don Don (sfx)* sound, attempting to break it, and that a squad made up of dozens of people were trying to force their way in.

The man with the gun in hand, clad in military uniform, said.

"Kurenai Gekkou! You are surrounded! If you give yourself up obediently, we will spare your life. Open the door and come out of there!"

His voice resounded.

Looking at that.

"....."

Gekkou merely smiled.

He smiled at the foolish figures of the military folks who were trying to force their way in with brute strength .

"You can't open that door with that alone. A seal has already been placed on it. Unless you get a Curse Breaker , that door won't open."

The man outside then said.

"We've already summoned a Curse Breaker. It's only a matter of time before the door opens. But, you should surrender before that. If you value your li....."

However, at that point, Gekkou had already stopped listening to the meaningless talk of that man.

And once again, he looked at the documents on the desk.

The last section.

The section in the very last page.

That single mad Demon God believer who was trying to take Saitohimea captive, isn't he Kurenai Gekkou --- the Miyasaka High student council president that your military is keeping?

"....."

However, the guy who became the student council president of Miyasaka High, Gekkou, only had knowledge restricted to **<< S-a-c-r-i-f-i-c-e >>** Kurogane Taito, the schoolmate he was tasked by the military to keep an eye on, and had not a single clue about the existence of Bahlskra and such.

In other words, Gekkou had never had the slightest thought of something like resurrecting that unknown monster.

But the military and the **Church** were under the wrong impression that Gekkou was trying to resurrect Bahlskra.

For some reason, the military and the **Church** had misunderstood that Gekkou was trying to resurrect someone he was completely unacquainted with.

Why was that so?

Why had the military misunderstood that Gekkou was trying to resurrect Bahlskra?

In response to that.

"..... is it Hinata?"

As he said that, a smile floated on his face.

The person who has the same appearance as himself,

"So Hinata is trying to resurrect Bahlskra?"

As he said that, a smile floated on his face.

And he thought that it was interesting. He thought that it was extremely interesting.

A legendary monster.

The worst kind of monster that was causing such a ruckus in the military.

The fearsome monster that sparked such fear in the **Church**.

Hinata was attempting to get hold of that power. Hinata was desperately trying to get hold of that power.

Then.

Then.

"..... what will happen if I first get my hands on that?"

After saying that with a tinge of happiness in his tone, he stood up. Following that.

"Mirai, not done yet?"

He said.

Before him. The Mirai who was fighting flashily with the monster in the student council room,

"Orrssha I've beaten itttttttttttttttttttttttttt!!"

Her voice rang out.

But Gekkou ignored that. And then once again, he verified the various places which he should read over in the documents.

"Eh? Erm, hello, Gekkou, I've beaten it, you know?"

"....."

"I've beaten the monster, you know?"

"....."

"Hey hey? I defeated the monster in a really cool....."

"....."

"Why are you ignoring meeeeeeeeeeeeee!? I gave everything I got, so don't ignore meeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!?"

"....."

"Hey! Hey Gekkou! Are you listening!?"

Mirai hollered.

Even with that, he continued ignoring her, and finished reading all the important parts of the documents, then looked up and said.

"Are you done?"

"I was done a long time ago!"

"You're slow."

"Gekkou is the slow one, hello!!"

"Don't make excuses."

Instantly, Mirai, with a dumbstruck face,

"Eeeehhhhhhhhhhhhhh!? Wait, uweeehhhhhhh!? What's with this guy!? What's with this guy!? Where the hell can I vent this rage on!?"

However she hollered, it didn't matter.

Gekkou looked at the clock in the room. It was 2052 hours. Until the school opens the next morning, there was still roughly a night's worth of time left. It was likely that the military wanted to clear up all this mess before the school starts, without any students or school personnel being the wiser. At that thought,

"..... more than enough."

Gekkou murmured.

He had the confidence that he could resolve this complicated state of affairs with just one night.

He looked.

He looked at the dimensional rift that Mirai had been pressing against.

Currently, that opened up dimensional rift was connected to a world that was different from this one.

When Gekkou disregarded his orders to keep an eye on Kurogane Taito, he had already discovered the location of the world in which Saitohimea was imprisoned, and the first thing he did was open a rift to connect to that place.

Following that, if he were in Saitohimea's shoes and were to escape, he would probably open a rift to connect to a place somewhere around here.

On top of that, he would open a rift on the other side to connect it.

Warping space, warping dimensions, connecting to unbelievable worlds with a portal.

"....."

The only place where this could be done is this school, no, the location on which Miyasaka High was built --- the

location known as the **<< Holy Ground >>** due to its special properties.

Brats who possess a particular **power**, the **power** that equates to being at an age of eighteen years or younger, are able to connect the gaps dividing the different dimensions at their whim, and thus move among them.

The other worlds that are connected here come in various shapes and sizes.

Worlds such as the prison constructed by the **Church** to imprison Saitohimea with a large expanse of land.

It's a much more immense world than this one here --- in other words, a world much more immense than the Earth, but yet, it was filled with nothing but plains and a lone dragon which lived there.

Or a world with merely three towns in which lived various kind of beasts that continuously wage wars.

Large ones, small ones, various kinds, a countless number of worlds.

One could connect to any of them via this school by choice.

One could go to any of them from this school.

It was an exceptionally special power. It was an attractive power that had prompted the military to build a school in order to hide it from other countries.

Of course, there were certain risks that came with it.

Connecting to other dimensions as and when one likes may result in the possibility of being attacked by a monster from some strange and unknown world.

Such as connecting to sealed grounds which all are forbidden to set foot on may result in the undertaking of the penalties that come with the violation, or such as connecting to a place where a death curse is activated instantaneously, thus causing one's own death; such are the possibilities.

On top of that, this is an unstable place that could connect to anywhere, and if a monster from the other side comes over to feed, every student and individual of the school will die within the day; that kind of possibility ---

"....."

No, it was not just a possibility; there was one time eighteen years ago, when such a event did take place. During that time, the useless student council president could not control the rift, and allowed the inhabitants from the other world to invade the school.

But even so. Even with those risks, this special property of the location could yield substantial returns.

"....."

At that moment, once again, Gekkou looked at the squad that was still frantically trying to remove the seal. He looked at the figures of all those useless, unsightly adults of this country who were trying to stop him.

Looking at that, a smile floated on his face.

"You guys won't be able to control this power."

After saying that, once again, he looked at the rift that Mirai was pressing on earlier.

This rift seemed to form a **<< Way >>** to the dimensional space in which Gekkou had expected Saitohimea to be.

"Seems like I hit the jackpot."

He said.

The **<< Way >>** was created, and he was attacked. Apparently, Saitohimea had deemed that she couldn't cross over to this side, and had instead sent a monster to attack them.

But.

"I won't let you escape, Saitohimea."

As he said that, he grabbed hold of the sword on his desk. Following that, he moved forward to the dimensional rift.

And he said to the Mirai who was standing beside the rift.

"..... alright. Let's go over to the other side."

"I refuse."

"Small fries have no say in the matter."

"Uwahhhhhhhhhhh, uwahhhhhhhhhhhhh, I, I really hate....."

Ignoring her, Gekkou grabbed hold of Mirai's head.

"Eh? Eh? Wait, what are you....."

However, he ignored that as well, and forcibly pushed her head into the rift,

"Wait, why do I have to be the first....."

"Shut up."

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!?"

After ascertaining that Mirai had disappeared into the other dimension,

"How is it? Is it safe?"

He asked.

On saying that, Mirai's angry face came poking out of the dimensional rift,

"I, I'm going to kill youuu!"

"Hm. Seems like it's safe. Then, let's go."

As he said that, in one stride, he put his foot forward and stepped into the rift.

And then, the two of them disappeared.

To the other side.

To the other side of the story.

What will await them there?

Kachin (sfx: loud click of clock), the clock in the room sounded.

The needle struck nine, and the school chime rang out.

The chime that normally should not be ringing at this time of the night rang out.

And then, as if to aid the story in taking shape, one other destiny started running.

Chapter 4 - The Scarlet Witch

A few hours before that.

A few minutes before Kurogane Taito was knocked down by a truck.

The whole world was dominated by pain and despair.

It was a world without anything.

Light. Sound. Dreams, hopes, joy, sadness, a world which had lost anything and everything.

It was in this world without anything, that Saitohimea was confined.

"....."

With a small body. Bearing a childish form that was exactly the same as nine years ago, when she was shut inside here.

Even in this world without any light, she is an extremely beautiful young girl.

But her beauty was limited to only her appearance.

To the dispirited her who had ended up in a state akin to junk, the beauty was completely meaningless to her.

"....."

Both her hands and feet were staked to the ground.

Even though no blood was flowing, the same pain which she had felt at the instant she was pierced had continued to assault her all this while. That was the nature of the curse carried by the stakes. The pain which was at the level where a normal person would have asked to be killed had been running through her hands, feet, and entire body.

The **Church** said that it was a punishment.

A punishment for the criminal comrade of Bahlskra, who was responsible for sending the world into confusion, they said.

Nine years had passed since then.

During these nine years, that pain that could have driven her crazy was running through her body.

The pain coursing through her was so intense to the point where she could cry out in anguish, anguish, anguish, no, even that was not enough to describe its extent.

"....."

But even so, she said nothing.

She merely stared ahead with her empty eyes.

As if she was waiting for something.

As if she was waiting for something to come, she could only stare into the darkness of this world.

Of course, at the start, she hollered.

In too much despair.

In a solitude too deep, she hollered.

Save me.

Someone save me.

I'm lonely.

I'm feeling lonely, all alone in this dark place, she hollered.

But that voice did not reverberate.

Since there was no sound here.

Since there was no light here.

Since there was no hope here, her cries of anguish did not reverberate.

And did not reach anyone.

"....."

That's why she had given up in calling out. And thus, she only continued looking into the darkness.

Nine years.

Three thousand, two hundred, and eighty-five days.

Seventy-eight thousand, eight hundred and forty hours.

"....."

It's long.

Terribly long.

"....."

Occasionally.

Occasionally, she thought that maybe she was truly going mad.

Bitterly, painfully, at this rate, she thought she was going to dissolve into the darkness.

At those times, even though being aware that it's useless, she would try opening her mouth. To ascertain that she still had a mouth. She would open her mouth to ascertain that she was still sane, that she was still alive, that she was still here in the darkness.

"....."

Taito, she would try calling his name.

Of course, her voice wouldn't reverberate. Even when she murmured his name, she couldn't hear it.

But still, even so.

"....."

When she tried mouthing his name, it would lessen her pain, if only by a little.

She smiled and said again.

Taito.

She called his name.

And then, *not yet?*, she murmured.

Even when no sound reverberated, "*not yet?*", she murmured alone, all alone in absolute solitude.

"....."

You're not yet here to get me, I wonder?.

It'll take a little while more huh, I wonder?.

I'm lonely, you know.

I'm in pain, you know.

It's really painful, you know, Taito.

This place is really dark. So dark, that it feels lonely to be here by myself.

Her hands and feet were in pain.

There was no light nor any scenery.

Even if she cried, Taito would not be there to wipe off her tears like before.

That's why, everyday, she seemed about to give up.

But still, even so.

"....."

Every time when she wanted to give up, his face would surface.

The face of the boy who had called out to her, one who had been plagued with solitude since she was born, would surface.

Because she was born with too great a power, she had always been used, always been used, and sunk in despair about everything, she, who should have erased her presence.

She, who should have placed a curse upon herself, a curse that would hide her from the eyes of all, but yet, for some reason, he could see her, and called her a comrade, a friend, those words of his would surface in her mind.

And then he said it. Playing the scene in her mind, he said it. With his usual kind, gentle face.

"I enjoy being with Himea."

He had said that to me.

Even though he had yet to be conferred with any power. Even though I have yet to confer him with any power. Even though he was not wielding any of my power --- without asking anything from me, he smiled kindly,

"I enjoy being with Himea."

He had said that to me.

Those words sent a wave of shock into me, paralyzing me. And I can remember my whole body shaking in immense joy.

Since that was the first time I've heard that.

Ever since I was born, everyone was telling me that they wanted my power. They told me that they only wanted the power that was inside me. They were only thinking of how to use my power.

But yet, Taito, truly, without asking anything of me,

"I really enjoy being with Himea."

He had said that to me.

Just by remembering that brings tears to my eyes.

And I said that I enjoyed it as well. I'm really filled with joy whenever I'm with Taito, I told him. My body will only tremble when I'm with Taito, I told him. So joyful that I couldn't care about anything else, that I feel like crying, I told him.

I really want to tell him more of that --- she thought.

"....."

She thought in this place that had nothing else but darkness.

That's why.

"....."

That's why she had hidden all her powers inside of Taito. In order to prevent anyone other than Taito from using her powers. She would only use her powers for his sake. *Since I've decided that I would give my powers only to him*.

"....."

That's why she made a contract.

Choosing Taito as the **<< S-a-c-r-i-f-i-c-e >>** and granting him immortality, and on top of that, hiding all her powers inside of him.

Covering up her powers with a complex enchantment, hiding them inside of him.

The conditions for the powers to return to her were as follows.

1. Taito dies, and the power of immortality activates.

2. That Taito still remembers me, even till now, and wants to seek me out to save me.

She had set it such that her powers would only return at the time when the two conditions were met.

Once she had decided those conditions, even she would not be able to revert them. With that powerful enchantment, she had placed her powers inside of Taito.

In order to prevent Hinata from uncovering the location of her powers.

In order to prevent the **Church** from uncovering the location of her powers.

In order to prevent Bahlskra from uncovering the location of her powers.

And others.

In order to prevent the others who would want to make use of her powers from uncovering the location of her powers, she had hidden her powers inside of Taito with these strict conditions attached.

"....."

But sometimes, she would think.

Unexpectedly, the depths of her heart would sometimes be pricked with a sense of unease.

"....."

If perhaps, Taito had already forgotten about me, and not coming to save me, what should I do?, she would think.

If perhaps, Taito is already living in happiness with someone else..... and no longer wants to see me, and no longer thinks about saving me, what should I do then?, she would think.

"....."

But, even if that happens.

"....."

Even If that happens, it's fine, she would think.

As long as Taito is happy, it's fine, she would think.

It can't be helped right.

Since a very long time had since gone by.

With the passing of such a long time, the situation changes. The world changes. Even a human heart.

"....."

Even Taito might have a change of heart.

That can't be helped.

It can't be helped, she would think.

"....."

The only person who wouldn't change would be herself.

Only herself, who would be stupidly screaming alone in this darkness.

Thinking about that, *ahaha*, she would laugh out. *Ahaha* , she would laugh out at her own despair. And then, *it can't be helped*, she would murmur once again. *If Taito is living in happiness, if he's happy, even if he forgets me, so shall it be*, she would murmur.

But.

But, just as she thought.

Just as she thought.

"....."

I won't want that, she would think.

I don't want this, I don't want this, I don't want to continue living alone for eternity like this, she would think.

It's lonely. It's painful.

She really didn't want to be forgotten.

I don't want you to forget me.

I don't want you to forget me.

Hey, Taito, please.

Don't.

Don't forget me.

She would cry out, she would cry out in a frantic voice
.

But, as expected, it didn't reach anyone. Since the world was dominated by darkness.

Since it was dominated by despair.

That's why, Himea felt like crying. She was on the verge of tears. For eternity, she would remain in this darkness, in this despair, in this soundless world ---

In an aimless, meaningless solitude, she would pass the time fruitlessly.

At that moment.

"....."

Suddenly, something irregular happened. And she knew that something in her had changed.

She opened her eyes. She opened her eyes wide. But all she could see was darkness. Of course. There was no light here. However, right now, what she felt was not the feeling of darkness that had been present up till now. It was neither the feeling of despair.

No, with her powers.

"....."

All of a sudden, with the powers that had come back to her, she could feel the area beyond the reach of this sundering darkness.

That's why she sundered it.

She opened her mouth,

"Begone."

She said.

That voice reverberated. Even though here was the world that should not be carrying any sound, her voice reverberated.

Immediately, the darkness parted.

A light radiated from within her.

The light returned to the world, and for the very first time, she was getting to know what kind of place this was.

It was a narrow, narrow, narrow prison.

Without a ceiling, without a floor, without walls, it was a monotonous white-colored world without a scenery.

But, looking at that whiteness.

Looking at that whiteness that was neither darkness nor blackness, she felt like crying. She felt like crying out loud. However, without uttering anything, she removed the stakes --- the weak curse attached to them seemed like nothing to her now --- that had been impaled into her hands and feet.

And she stood up. Following that,

"Aah....."

She murmured. Once again, she felt like crying on hearing her own voice. Her voice resounded. And her powers had returned.

In response to that.

"..... Taito..... Taito is coming to save me....."

She murmured, and once again, she was on the verge of tears. Even though her tears were overflowing, *Uhuhu*, she laughed. And she remembered.

The promise. That promise. That's right. They made a promise. To meet there. They made a promise to rendezvous there if they were to get separated.

The preparations were already in place.

A dimensional rift to that place had already been prepared in advance nine years ago.

The place where they had agreed to meet.

"I have to go."

As she said that, she raised her hands, and at the moment she was about to make a dimensional rift in this world,

"....."

She stopped. And then.

"..... erm, how do I look now, I wonder?"

She murmured.

A mirror was conjured into her hand, and she looked at her own reflection. At least, she was wearing some clothes. Though those ragged white clothes looked like those worn by patients. But the crux was the appearance of her body that was wearing those clothes.

A still childish body. Even though nine years had gone by, she still retained her childish body.

On seeing that, she tilted her head slightly,

"..... er~m, if I remember correctly, I was in the form of a six year old around the time when I met Taito right? So, about nine years had passed since then..... uhn. In any case, I'd have to fix that."

As she said that, she gave a small tap to her body. After she did that, she again chanted several lines of spell verses.

Following that, all of a sudden, her body started growing.

These nine years. She was bringing back these nine years of time that had been frozen by the cursed stakes.

And then, her figure had become that of a fifteen year old young girl. With a slender and nicely shaped body, and long legs. She knew not how tall Taito had grown, but for now, she had made her height neither too tall nor too short.

With long lavender colored hair flowing all the way to her back and long eyelashes. And those mischievous deep crimson eyes that had become more adult-like.

With those deep crimson eyes, she looked at her reflection in the mirror.

"..... u~mm. Will Taito tell me that I'm cute? Then again, if he doesn't, I'm going to kill him."

She said, and smiled.

She then snapped her fingers. Clothes were conjured and affixed to her body. A white one-piece dress. Since she didn't know what was fashionable right now in the world, and what kind of clothes did Taito like, she went for a safe choice.

And once again, she raised her hand before her. And spread her long, slender fingers. This time round, she would sever this damn annoying prison.

And then go meet Taito.

Go meet Tai.....

"Uwuu, don't start getting nervous."

As she muttered, she started severing the prison that been constructed by the **Church** in this alternate dimension.

Instantly.

She noticed a small, a really small black dot on the white wall before her.

"Huh?"

She murmured.

Looking intently at the black dot with her deep crimson eyes, she could tell that it was a spider.

It was a really, really small spider.

A spider so small that it would be blown away with a single breath, was there. However, on seeing that.

"....."

She became nervous.

Since aside from herself, no other living thing should be able to exist in this prison.

Since, in a world without food and water, bearing only darkness, there's no way another living thing could live and exist here.

At that moment, a voice came from the spider.

"Ah, as I thought, you had hidden your powers away."

That voice which she had heard before. That most despicable voice which she had heard before. The voice of the demon god believer, who had attacked her and Taito, and killed Taito again, again, and again, and who further went on to take Himea away to conduct some terrible experiments repeatedly.

"..... Hi, Hinata....."

As she uttered, the spider said.

"It was indeed the right decision to attach a spying familiar spirit onto you. Nine years. Uhn. It took so long.

But, your powers appeared to have returned. Well then, I shall open a **<< Way >>** to your side to receive those powers, so wait a bit....."

But, without waiting for him to finish, she waved her hand.

"Be, begone!"

She shouted and invoked her powers.

As she did that, an intense shockwave was emitted from her hand. Towards the spider.

But the spider was not the least intimidated.

"Hahaha, stop wasting your efforts. Since our last battle, you should be full well aware of the difference in our strength right? On top of that, it has been nine years since then. You have not done anything during this time. The gap between you and me has only widened. Now, give it up already, and just wait there. I'll be right th....."

At that moment, at the centre of the spider on the white wall before her, the dimension started warping.

And the voice came again.

"I'll be right there. I'll be right there in a moment."

On hearing that, Himea's face contorted in fear, and trembling, she turned on her heel.

"What, what should I do?"

She muttered.

"Even though I thought I could get to see Taito soon, but yet....."

She muttered.

"In, in the first place, for him to come get me before Taito, what's the meaning of this!"

She uttered angrily and waved her hand.

"Sunder."

Bringing forth her power, she opened an air hole on the wall opposite from the one that Hinata was about to come through. She passed through the hole. And came out into an unfathomable, infinite corridor made from blue-black bricks.

Himea turned her head around, and thrust her hand towards the direction of her former prison.

"..... **<< Magical Being That Dwells In The Magnetic Plane >>**, abide by our pact, come forth to me!"

She called forth a simple familiar. Immediately, in the space before her hand, a slimy, sludge-like, insubstantial monster was conjured.

<< Vaaaaaaa -- Va -- Va -- Vaaaaaaaaaaa 1 Aaaa 1 Aaaa 12 Aaa >>

An ear-splitting howl. After ascertaining that, she pulled her hand away from the prison.

And was about to close the hole.

In reponse to that.

<< Vaa? >>

The familiar cried out in alarm,

"I'm being pursued. Would you devour and stop the enemy for me? Greel."

On hearing Himea's words, the slimy monster nodded with its head whose location on the body was a mystery,

<< Va va va va >>

It was probably an acknowledgement. In response to that, she nodded back and closed off the dimensional rift.

Following that, she started running along the infinite corridor.

After advancing forward for a while, she further went on to open another dimensional rift. Where this rift connected to was unknown to her. Since this was not the **<< Holy Ground >>**, she could not freely choose the pathway of the conduits.

The only place she could choose was the anchored location that was connected to the portal that had been set up in advance, the location at which she was supposed to meet Taito, but right now, since she was being pursued, there was no way she could go there.

Since if Taito were to stand before Hinata again, this time round, he would probably be killed for certain.

That's why she ran. Moving from dimension to dimension, she ran.

Of course, moving between randomly opened rifts was a pretty dangerous act itself.

Though there existed a possibility of connecting to an incredible place where a death curse is activated instantly the conduit is opened, but still, even so,

"....."

There was no time to hesitate.

She had to lose him somehow. She had to get to a faraway place, a place without him.

That's why she ran frantically. And then she took a quick glance behind her.

Behind her. In the space at the place where she had released her familiar, it had already begun warping.

Even though the familiar was not really that weak, Hinata had broken through easily.

She frowned.

"I need to get a little further away....."

Saying that, she waved her hand. Once again, a dimensional rift opened. This time round, the rift opened into a desert world that was red as blood.

Except that this was a vast expanse of land. Different from the corridor and prison, it was a real world with a vast expanse of land.

"It will be easier to escape if it's this vast right....."

As she said that, she entered the conduit.

But on that side of the rift.

She could see that the scenery of the blood red desert on the other side had started warping.

She could see the formation of a dimensional rift.

And on the other side of that rift.

"....."

She could see a young girl with a pair of gentle eyes and a ponytail.

A man who was drinking red tea while reading a book . Even though he looked different from before, she could tell right away.

Jet black hair and piercing eyes. A stand-up collar school uniform.

"....."

Hinata.

Even though he was no longer in the form of a child, she could tell that it was him with just one look.

That Hinata looked up and looked in her direction, Looking at her with rational, black eyes with a quiet light embedded within them.

Different from before, there was a trace of humanity and emotions remaining within them, but in spite of that, there was no doubt that the face belonged to him. That demon god believer. That fellow looked here and then looked to the side at the cute girl with the gentle eyes.

"..... alright. The **<< Way >>** has been opened. Well, let's go, Mirai."

And he stood up.

Himea raised her hand,

"Come, come here as well, **<< Magical Being That Dwells In The Magnetic Plane >>**, abide by our pact, come forth to me!"

She summoned another Greel.

<< Vaaaaaaa -- Va -- Va -- Vaaaaaaaaaaa 1 Aaaa 1 Aaaa 12 Aaa >>

Letting out a howl, appearing onto the blood red desert with a bang, once again, the sludge-like magical being looked at her,

<< Va va? >>

It was seeking for Himea's instructions. And she pointed towards the other dimensional rift,

"De, defeat them!"

<< Va va vaa 2214 aa >>

And then Greel leaped. Towards the dimensional rift opened by Hinata, it leaped.

On seeing that, the young girl with the gentle eyes and ponytail began,

"Uwahh, this is terrible, a monster is coming!?"

As she said that, the rift was closed hurriedly.

However, Greel managed to lodge itself into a gap of the rift. And it forcibly tried to wrench open the rift. Don! Don! Attaching itself forcefully, and attempting to go through to the other side.

On seeing that,

"You, you can do it, Greel!"

After ascertaining that, Himea closed the conduit connected to the blood red desert.

And then, she let out a sigh.

Somehow, it seemed like Hinata would not easily defeat Greel. Otherwise, he wouldn't have hurriedly tried to close that dimensional rift. So, in other words, she managed to buy some tim.....

"....."

At that moment.

From behind her, *ga ga ga ga*, an ear-splitting sound rang out from the dimensional rift which she had used to get away from the prison.

On hearing that, Himea turned around.

And she could see from that dimensional rift, a huge, an immensely huge leg of a spider stepping through to this side.

And furthermore, on top of that spider

"....."

He was right there.

That man.

A man that looked just like the one who was drinking red tea on the other side of the dimension with the blood red desert a while ago.

Jet black hair and piercing eyes.

The same identical face. The same identical face as the one with the stand-up collar earlier.

But the type of eyes he had were different. What was embedded within those eyes was of a different nature. A dark color with no trace of any emotion, overflowing with a feel of insanity. The same color as the eyes of that

boy who had attacked Taito and Himea when they were children.

Compared to these, the eyes of the man with the stand-up collar could even be said to be kind.

That man with those freezing cold eyes spoke.

In a delighted tone. Despite having a face that didn't look like he was having fun, he spoke in an extremely delighted tone,

"..... didn't I tell you I won't let you escape?"

Hinata said.

On hearing that, she could not reply. Without saying a word, once again, she opened that dimensional rift which she had just closed a moment ago.

And then Hinata said,

"As I was saying, even if you ru....."

However, without waiting for him to finish, she escaped.

Into the blood red desert world.

And while escaping, she thought.

While her face was on the verge of tears, she thought.

Just like before. This was the same as before, she thought.

Trying her best to somehow escape the clutches of Hinata in order to meet up with Taito, but, due to her excessive injuries, she was captured by strange people.

And once again, she returned to the days when she was made use of.

Being made use of, being the subject of experiments, and then discarded.

On top of that, she was sold to the **Church**, and subsequently imprisoned.

And for nine years, nine whole years, she could not see Taito. She could not see him. Despite how much she had wanted to see him for a long, long time, it didn't happen.

And, it's happening again.

Before she could meet him.

Before she could see him.

"..... maybe I'll die."

As she mumbled, she felt like crying.

But, even so, Himea ran.

She ran on the desert of blood in desperation.

Taito probably wouldn't be up ahead.

Since it wasn't the appointed place which they had agreed on.

Since it wasn't that appointed park where they had played together.

But.

"....."

Even so, she.

Chapter 5 - The Moon Illuminating The Night

Returning to the former place.

At the wooded path.

Beyond that was the residential street. Further beyond the residential street is a lone alley. In that alley ---

"....."

Kurogane Taito was running.

His surroundings were already totally dark.

The time was just over eight. Even if he were to go back home now, his dinner would already be cold! *Didn't you say you're going to be back early*, her sister would probably rant off,

"....."

However, Taito had no intention of returning home for now.

A promise. With her. He had a promise with that little girl who had appeared in his dreams.

That's why he was running. Running at a frantic pace.

"Uwahhhhhhhhhhh running is such a pain."

He ran as he yelled.

And he ascertained his surroundings as he ran.

He was now in an alley a little south of the school.

His house was just a little up ahead.

Being fed up of moving around frequently because of his job, his father went independent and had said, *"Alright, Taito, we're not going to move anymore! We shall stay in this Miyasaka town forever!"*, and full of vigor, he went on to buy a detached home south of the school, even though their former apartment was just north of the school.

And further north of that apartment, was the park in which he had made the promise with Himea,

"..... ugh, it's far! How many kilometers did I think it was!?"

Even having verified it with the map he brought up in his mind, it was probably about eight kilometers in a straight line. But the truth was, it seemed to be over ten kilometers away. Having not engaged in much exercise since he stopped karate, and having been running at full speed throughout, there were about seven times during which he felt like puking.

But even so, he ran on. He ran at a speed that was bordering on his limits. He was running at the same frantic pace as he did when his timing had to be taken before the girls when they join the boys for PE on occasion due to their own PE sensei being absent. His whole body was screaming in anguish. Covered in sweat, and the muscles of his legs getting heavier. Before long, he went past his limits and *ban (sfx)*, a surprisingly large sound rang out and his Achilles tendon snapped.

"Ouccchhhhhhh."

Taito yelled.

But.

But, he did not stop running. His Achilles tendon was repaired immediately.

When that happened, all his muscle aches throughout his entire body left him.

This was a result of his experimentation on running a while ago.

For some reason, the ability conferred to him by Himea --- an ability with which he wouldn't truly die unless he dies seven times --- would somehow, instantly recover all his wounds and tiredness whenever a part of his body has gone beyond its limits, it seems.

That's why, when he was revived after dying once from getting knocked down by the truck, his past injury --- the injury which he incurred on the back of his leg during his karate training was completely healed.

And, even now.

With all his strength, having covered a kilometer, he continued running. He continued running at an unbelievable speed over this long distance. Terribly tough. It was terribly tough to run at the speed where his Achilles tendon felt like tearing and his lungs felt like exploding.

"It's, it's hard to breathe..... so please, if my tendon doesn't tear, my lungs won't hold....."

And, at that moment, once again, *bang*!

This time round, the acute pain came from his calf.

"Gaaaaaaaahhh, the pain sucks..... fuwah, got my breath back....."

He ran.

Feeling apologetic about having forgotten that promise from nine years ago, he ran with all his might. Even though all this hurrying wouldn't atone for anything. Even though there was no meaning to it. After all, he had made a girl wait for nine whole years, so what's another ten or fifteen minutes? That was what he could have said, but he was not that shameless. And then, Taito recalled the face of Himea when she was taken away.

A face on the verge of tears.

A totally resigned face.

And a kind face when she looked at him.

"Aahh, man."

He said.

"Aahh man, I have to hurry."

He said.

There was no guarantee that she would be at that park. She was kidnapped by Hinata. And even now, she might still be confined at Hinata's place.

No, she might even have died.....

"....."

As that thought came up, he shook his head.

That couldn't be. If that's the case, there would be no way she could have appeared in his dreams.

She was waiting. She was waiting for rescue. That's why she appeared in his head, and desperately kept telling him to remember.

And thus right now, he could feel a sense of urgency. For some reason, he could tell that she was facing some kind of great danger.

He didn't know why. He didn't know why he felt that way.

However, in the depths of his heart. From within the deepest recesses of his heart, *hurry, hurry, hurry, even if you tear your legs and tear your head off, even when that happens, it doesn't matter, so just hurry and get to that place. Run to that appointed place. Run. Run*.

Something was ordering him in that manner.

And thus, in complying with that, Taito ran.

"....."

He passed through the alley. And was approaching the cross junction at which he was knocked down by the truck. And beside the pedestrian crossing, was his bag which he had dropped earlier.

"My bag?"

Taito shouted, but he did not stop.

"I'll come back for it later....."

He muttered, then ignored the red light and crossed the junction. A sedan that couldn't brake in time came speeding towards him, and Taito jumped to dodge it.

But of course, there's no way he could dodge it, and the front glass struck his waist. His hip bone snapped. *Gyaaa*, he yelled. And with that, he was sent flying. But, while he was flying, he could feel the fracture healing. And then with that, carried by the momentum, he landed on the ground and further continued running.

"Ahhhh now, if only this ability would also take away the pain....."

As he grumbled, he ran.

In the midst of that.

On this 'go-home' path from the school to the cross junction, two girls who were coming from the direction of the school came into his view.

One of them had light brown hair with a short cut. Well tanned legs, white teeth, an athletic looking girl throughout.

And the other one.

The other girl,

"..... ah-reh, Taito?"

The other girl looked at him with a delighted face. Medium length black hair, large black eyes. A gentle smile.

It's Haruka. Slung at her shoulder was a soft case with a tennis racket inside.

On seeing that, Taito stopped,

"Oh? Your meeting ended this late?"

He said, but it's not Haruka --- but the other athletic looking girl beside her who made a grinning face,

"Ah-rah ah-rah? Your boyfriend has come to pick you up huh? Haruka-san?"

She said.

On hearing that, Haruka, in a frantic way,

"That, that's not it, Miki!"

After saying that, for some reason, her face was beaming happily as she looked at him,

"But, but, is it because of that? You came because you're worried about me?"

She said. For some reason, she had said it with a tinge of bashfulness.

On seeing that, Taito began,

"Eh? Ah? Erm....."

He faltered.

The athletic looking girl called Miki looked at them and chuckled.

"So shy and bashful, you guys are so cute..... perhaps I'm a nuisance? It's fine, you know? I can go back alone, you know?"

On hearing those words,

""It's ok it's ok.""

This time, it was both Taito and Haruka who spoke.

Miki smiled again.

"The two of you are really on good terms. Hey, you know? During club activities, Haruka only talks about y.. ...."

She was interrupted there.

"Uwahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! Uwahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

Haruka raised up both her hands and yelled. For some reason, her face was totally red.

"I'm going to send you flying, Miki!"

"Ehhehe ~"

The conversation went along those lines.

A conversation between two good friends.

But, even so, for now, Taito could not hear them properly. *Run*, *run*, the voice in the depths of his heart told him. It was not the voice of Himea. Ever since her voice, her thoughts, had disappeared from inside of him, they did not resound a second time. That's why the voice from the depths of his heart that was ordering him to run was his own.

Run. Hurry up. Master's going to die. Your master's going to die. The master of your life is going to die. If you don't want to die, go save your master. Hurry, hurry, hurry. She's in danger.....

And at that moment.

"Well, in any case, let's all go back together? Hey? Is that ok? Taito."

Haruka said.

But, in response to that.

"....."

Taito did not answer.

"?"

"....."

"Hey Taito, what's wrong?"

"....."

"Erm, are you perhaps angry about not being able to go back with me alone....."

But, at that juncture.

"Haruka!"

"Eh? Yes."

She looked at him. She looked at him with a nervous face.

Looking at that face of hers, Taito said.

"..... I'm sorry, but can you go back first? I have some business to attend to."

"Business."

"Yeah."

"At this time?"

"Yeah."

"What is it?"

Before he answered Haruka's question, that urgent voice within the depths of Taito's heart started urging him on, and then he said.

"To save someone."

On hearing that, Haruka started,

"Eh? Wait up Taito....."

That was all he heard.

Taito had continued running. He turned around the corner. And before him, was the Miyasaka High that he and Haruka go to. The school gates were already closed. That's why he couldn't cut through the school. He could not take the shorter route by cutting through the school in a stealthy way to reach the north side of the school.

For some reason, after this school is closed, there will be a few people standing guard outside to prevent

anyone from getting into the school. It seems like in the past, some suspicious individual sneaked into the school to take pictures for unseemly purposes and as a result of that incident, the school has been vigilant about its security.

And today, as usual, there would be a number of security guards in the school foyer ---

However, at that point.

"..... what's that?"

Taito murmured without thinking.

The reason was because, today, the people standing in the school foyer were not security guards.

The men standing in the school foyer seemed to be wearing black, military uniforms and carrying guns. But he couldn't tell what kind of people they were. The uniform didn't appear to belong to that of the JSDF, nor that of US army seen in movies.

Then, what is it? What are they up to? For an instant, Taito looked at them with a questioning look on his face, but right now, he didn't have time to tarry and waste

around here. That's why he started running again. On the right side of the school gate, he ran with his body alongside the wall. And as he ran, the dim, nagging sensation in his heart started growing.

He could feel something getting closer.

He could feel something important getting closer.

But, he could also feel that something important, was faced with a terrible impending danger.

"..... damn. Quickly..... faster, run."

He muttered.

And in doing so, for some reason, his speed went on to increase further. His leg muscles churned and he could feel its composition changing. Different from before. His unnecessary movement decreased, and after going beyond his body limits multiple times, moving at an abnormal speed, gradually, his body had gotten used to it.

But, it was still not enough.

Still not enough.

Faster, faster, faster, faster, faster speed to get to her.

Go to her!

And after a while.

"..... I'm hereeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

He stopped. But, due to the great momentum, he couldn't stop his body properly, lost his balance and fell.

"Oh, shit..... woahhhhh!?"

With that, he fell onto the ground rolling, and went past the entrance to the park. And as he lay on the ground,

"..... jeez."

He said in a groaning tone.

And then he got up. He stood up. Feeling deprived of air, *ze-haa*, he took a deep breath, his shoulders bobbed. He retraced his steps, and stood before the park. And then.

"....."

Taito gazed at the park.

The small park that was illuminated by street lamps at night.

A park which he had not been to for a long time.

The park in which he and Himea, just the two of them, had played together.

Looking at that.

And then.

"..... it seemed like it hasn't changed since nine years ago."

He murmured.

Jungle gym, swing, sand pit, horizontal bar.

A park with only those things.

For some reason, there was no bench here nor any couple making out. On top of that, this place was just off the residential district, and yet, there was never any sign of a raving drunk uncle or a young man of any sort.

There was also no sign of the professional homeless campers, thanks to the efforts of the neighbourhood association perhaps. Furthermore, a little further up ahead, was a larger park with more complete facilities, and as such, there were also no children here. To put it more accurately, he didn't think there were any children, but well, because of this and that, there was usually hardly any people here.

The only people here had always been Himea and Taito. The two of them aimlessly having fun and playing in the park. And beside the public toilet.

"....."

He could make out a voice appearing to be saying something.

He could not tell what was being said. Someone might be there. Perhaps, it was the rare couple who, wanting to disengage themselves from public eyes, doing some erotic stuff there.

But.

"....."

Taito started running once again.

Because the voice from within the depths of his heart was resounding again. *Hurry up. Quickly, quickly, go save her. Right there. She's right there. Your master.*

Save your master!

"....."

Complying with the voice, he ran.

Passing the jungle gym from the side, stepping onto the piled up sand in the sand pit, he flew to the side of the public toilet.

"....."

The figures of two people came into his sight.

One of the them was a man with jet black hair and piercing eyes. A man wearing a school uniform with a stand-up collar, a man whom he has seen before.

The man whom he saw in his classroom after school.

The popular guy of the school. A student council president at the mere age of sixteen, good in sports, and excellent in his academic results, the Mr. Super --- Kurenai Gekkou, who had come out of a warped space, which was formed, by only God knows how, from an opening in the wall of the toilet, and in his hand, he held some kind of fencing sword which was impaled into the back of another person.

And then, Taito looked at that other person.

He looked at that other person who was impaled to the ground with the sword.

And his eyes widened.

Looking at that person, his eyes widened.

"....."

It was a girl.

A very.

A very beautiful girl.

Taito looked at that girl's face.

Soft, lavender colored hair, white skin. Deep crimson eyes giving off a feeling of mischief, with such well-ordered features that it was hard to believe that they belong to a human.

No, she was really not a human. She's not a human being.

Since she was too beautiful.

Since she was too devilish.

On top of that, that beauty was even way more than that of before.

Her height reached up to Taito's ears. Probably around a hundred and sixty centimeters? Her relatively long legs could be seen extending out of that one-piece dress. And those fine, slender, white legs were soiled by the earth. Forcibly pinned to the ground, they were soiled by the earth.

She looked at Taito's face, and as she did that, her desperate, deep crimson eyes suddenly moist up.

"Ta, Taito!?"

She shouted.

With a quivering voice, she shouted.

And then, Taito called out as well.

Her name.

The name which he had forgotten for a long time.....

"Himea."

In the instant he called her name, tears flowed from her eyes. She sniffed, her face appearing to be one of desperate tolerance,

"You're late! You've come so late, Taito!"

She said.

On hearing that, Taito,

"..... I'm sorry."

He said. So as to speak, he couldn't say anything beyond that. He had forgotten all about it. He had

forgotten all about it ever since. He had proclaimed that he definitely wouldn't forget; even though he had proclaimed it in such a loud voice, he had forgotten about her, he had forgotten about her existence, and every single day, he had been leading a lazy, aimless, regular life.

And then he started imagining what kind of thoughts she might have been thinking about all this while.

Starting from her face.

The face of hers that was sniffing and sobbing, the face which was still beautiful in spite of that, he started imagining from that.

And then she said. She, who should have been a stubborn person, with a teasing but yet delighted smile, she said while she was crying,

"I, I wanted to see you..... Nine, nine years, nine years, I've waited. For nine years, I....."

However, in the midst of her words, Gekkou, who had her impaled with his sword, said.

"..... you're noisy. Shut up for a bit."

And he seemed about to apply more force to the sword, but.

Taito threw a stone he picked up from the ground. He threw it with all his might.

In response to that, Gekkou reacted immediately,

"Hn."

He promptly shifted his face, and dodged the stone. He looked at Taito. He looked at Taito with a cold, piercing look.

On seeing that, Taito said. Glaring straight at Gekkou, he said.

"..... damn you, what are you doing?"

On hearing that, Gekkou shifted his focus to him.

"..... hmpf. It's Kurogane Taito. Don't interfere. I'm kind of busy now."

"Huh?"

"I said to disappear. You won't be a match for me. If you want overlook this and flee, quickly disappear. Or else I will kill you, get it?"

He said.

He said it with the same quiet, intimidating voice that he used to threaten that delinquent Sakamaki.

But, Taito continued to look intently at Gekkou,

"The one who should disappear is you, isn't it? Withdraw your sword from Himea. Or else..... I'll kill you."

"Huh?"

"I'm serious."

As Taito said that, a smile floated on Gekkou's face.

"Horh. For a small fry, you sure are impertinent. Fine. I shall be your opponent for a while."

As he said that, he pulled his sword out of Himea.

At that juncture, Himea looked at Taito,

"Don't, don't do it. Run, Taito. This guy..... this guy is the monster Hinata who appeared before us nine years ago."

On hearing those words, Taito squinted his eyes. And once again, he looked straight at Gekkou's face.

It did seem like there was some resemblance, he realized. That young man. He did bear some resemblance to that incredibly powerful young man who had suddenly appeared on top of the jungle gym, he realized---

However, all of a sudden, Gekkou's expression changed. Up until just now, he had a calm, cold expression, but all of a sudden, his face became grim,

"Ahh? Hinata? Don't put me at the same level as that worthless trash. My name is Kurenai Gekkou."

He said.

On hearing that, Himea,

"Eh?"

She said in a befuddled voice, and looked up at him.

Taking advantage of their conversation, Taito ran. And swung his fist.

Speedily. Strongly. Launching it towards Gekkou's face accurately.

In response to that, Gekkou looked at him. With just a slightly surprised expression,

"Surprisingly fast. But, not my match....."

He swung his sword. He swung his sword in order to sever Taito's fist.

But, Taito did not dodge. The severed fist flew. And Taito caught hold of it with his left hand. And with that caught fist, he struck Gekkou's face.

"Gah."

Gekkou cried out in a groaning voice. With that, he took two, three steps back.

But Taito was indifferent to that. Taito attached his severed right fist back. As he did that, the regeneration took place immediately.

Gekkou, who was looking at that,

"..... wha..... ah, I see..... that's the power of the pitiful **<< S-a-c-r-i-f-i-c-e >>**, the obsession of a **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>**....."

He said, but Taito did not reply.

Taito went forward to help Himea up.

"Can you get up? Himea."

He said, and she nodded. Following that, she grabbed hold of Taito's arm. And she squeezed it. And then.

"I, I've been waiting for you all this while."

She said.

Taito nodded.

"I know."

He acknowledged.

And Himea began,

"If, if Taito were late, if Taito were late by another five minutes, I would get really angry, and would definitely kill you!"

She said.

The thought of killing him if he was late by another five minutes in spite of having waited for nine years.

In response to that, Taito grimaced.

He grimaced as he could imagine with certainty that during these nine years, she must have kept on repeating to herself, *another five minutes*, *just another five minutes*. He grimaced at her despair. Just imagining it was enough to feel the heartrending despair she must have felt.

In order to remain sane. Thinking that no one would come to save her, in order to remain sane. *Another five minutes. Just another five minutes*, imagining her pain as she repeated this to herself to comfort herself, Taito's face

contorted. Seeing her despair in his imagination, it brought him slightly to the verge of tearing, and in order to hold that back, his face contorted.

"..... uhn. You're right, I'm sorry."

He said.

Himea looked up at him and smiled. With a face streaked with tears, she smiled in satisfaction. And then,

"I'm glad you came."

As she said that, even though they were under such a pressing situation, she embraced Taito's body. She gave him a squeezing hug. Pressing against her --- a girl's surprisingly soft and warm body, completely different from what he had imagined, Taito.

In response to that.

"..... eh, erm....."

He uttered without thinking.

And then, with a flustered expression, he thought.

No, erm, erh, isn't this a little bad? Isn't this a little bad in this kind of situation? It would be really bad if we don't get away from here now, I think, well, erm, in any case, release me, would you? Ok? Alright?

He wanted to say.

However.

"....."

He couldn't do it.

Because her shoulders.

"....."

Her shoulders were quivering terribly.

It was as if she was a child who had just had a bad dream, and shaking in fear from some ghost she had seen .

That's why Taito,

"....."

Hugged her shoulders. He hugged her slender, fine shoulders that looked as if they would break if he put in too much strength in his hug.

And then.

"..... I'm really sorry."

Taito said.

Himea, with her face still buried in Taito's chest,

"..... I won't forgive you even if you apologize now..... "

She said.

On hearing that, Taito had a troubled look on his face. Wrapping his arms around her shoulders, he had a troubled look on his face.

"So, what should I do then?"

And then she said. As expected, with a quivering voice . But yet, with a tinge of stubbornness that had returned to that voice.

"You don't need to do anything. As long as you don't leave me. As long as you don't leave me again..... I shall forgive you just this once."

Himea said.

On hearing that.

On hearing those words of hers.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa <3"

A scream suddenly sounded from behind Taito.

On hearing that, Taito,

"Eh?"

He turned around.

From the space, distorted from some unknown reason, opening up in the wall of the public toilet, the face of a strange girl, with something resembling lightning rippling through her hair, popped out.

Taito knew that face. Rather, the face that Taito knew does not have such hair, but, it was a face that Taito knew. And on seeing that, he,

"You, you are Andou? Eh, but why? What's with the hair?"

Despite hearing that, that young girl started without answering his query,

"..... kyaaa <3, kyaaa kyaaa <3, Gekkou, did you see that? It's a love scene! It's a love scene, you know!"

Her voice rang out.

On hearing that, Gekkou, in an indifferent tone,

"Damn idiot. Those are our enemies, Mirai. Quickly go kill them."

He said.

Mirai.

Andou Mirai.

As he thought, she was that Andou Mirai from the neighbouring class, whom the boys would talk about in such a manner: *That Andou Mirai is a real cutey ~ but a little nutty though*. For some reason, her face was poking out from the toilet, and hair seemed to be crackling with lightning for some unknown reason ---

That very Mirai said. She said to Gekkou.

"Ehhh ~? But but in this situation, doesn't it make us look like the bad guys? Well, Gekkou has always been one though."

"Wrong. I'm a genius."

"..... huh?"

"Whatever, you just need to listen to me. I'd never go wrong."

"B, but."

"Shut up and follow what I say. You are my thing, right!"

He said, and in response to those words.

For some reason, Mirai fell silent all of a sudden. And with her face slightly flushed,

"I, I, I got it."

She replied.

"Sorry for killing you guys."

She directed those words to Taito.

And then she flung herself and came flying out of that warped space, and raised her hand. She raised her hand, pointing it straight at them.

And then.

"Go, Lightning Biribiri."

She shouted.

Instantly.

Unbelievably, something that resembled lightning really started gathering in her hand.

"What, what is she!? Ugh, shit!?"

Taito said. Following that, he pushed Himea who was clinging onto him away.

Instantly.

The lightning was released.

That lightning pierced through Taito's chest. Piercing through, and with that, passing through from the back. Consequently, a hole had opened up in his chest. Right at where the heart was.

If he were normal, it would have been an instantaneous death.

A normal human would have died instantaneously.

But Taito did not die.

Since he wasn't normal, he didn't die.

For some reason, his usual ordinary life had ended, his regular life had ended, and because he had turned into something inexplicable, he did not die.

But, well, even so, it's fine, Taito thought.

He had always been bored.

Previously, nothing had ever changed, neither his dreams, nor was there anything in particular he wanted to do, day by day, he had always been bored.

But it's different now. There was something he could do.

That was.

"....."

That was really a great feeling.

Gradually, the hole in his chest closed up.

Surprised at that, Mirai looked at him, flabbergasted,

"Ah, ah, that's right! This guy, is the Mr. Incredible who can still live even when his head flies off! As expected of Gekkou! He knew even this....."

But, she stopped in mid-sentence.

Taito had grabbed hold of Mirai's hand, the one which had released the lightning.

"Eh?"

And on top of that, he grabbed hold of the other hand as well, restraining her.

In response to that,

"St, stop."

As she said that, her hair which was filled with lightning moved. And then, taking the form of something resembling swords, they came thrusting towards his arms, but of course, Taito was unconcerned with that.

Following that, Himea dashed over to their side, and struck Mirai's face with her hand. And then,

"Restrain(Aruto)."

She said.

And Mirai's movements stopped.

Mirai's face turned into one of surprise,

"Oh, oh, oh ~!? What's this, awesome! This is bad Gekkou. I can't move."

On hearing that, Gekkou scowled,

"This useless small fry."

"I'm not a small....."

Taito pressed against her mouth. As well as her head. And then.

"The situation has reversed ~. Now now Kurenai-kun. What would you do? This time, we have taken a hostage however..... for now, throw down your sword, would you?"

Taito said.

Of course, there's no way this guy would throw away his sword.

He had heard a rumor that this always calm, cold-hearted fellow had beaten the last student council

president until he was half-dead to wrest his power away from him; such a person wouldn't throw away his sword just because of a hostage.

No, if this was that same Hinata.

That Hinata who had killed Taito again and again, and taken Himea away from him, would willingly throw away the lives of one, two, three, or even hundred hostages.....

"....."

But, at that moment.

Clang, a sound rang out.

And before his eyes.

Gekkou, who had his usual cold eyes, readily threw his sword onto the ground.

And he then glared in Taito's direction,

"Done. Now, release Mirai."

He said.

In response to that.

The person most surprised at seeing that,

"
Eeeeeeeeeeehhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh
!?"

Was the hostage Mirai.

"Is this for real? No way no way? Eh? Gekkou is willing to throw away his sword for me?"

As she said that, Gekkou made an exasperated face and looked at Mirai,

"Damn. Shut up small fry. You're just a hindrance. I'm not throwing it away for your sake. It's just that I've judged that I have no need for **Wicked Blade** Spell Error to deal with the likes of them. You can just die there."

He said, and Mirai,

"Eh."

She said.

"Eehhhhhhhhhhehehehehehhehehehe ~ <3."

After laughing out in a gross manner, she started grinning,

"Somehow, somehow, right now, since I'm in ultra high spirits, I think I shall get a little serious ~"

After saying that, she raised her hand. And she grabbed hold of Taito's arm that was pressing against her head.

This time round, it was Himea's turn to be surprised.

"No way? She broke free of the spell easily..... what is this girl....."

Mirai replied to those words. With a delighted face,

"A monster ~, roarr!"

On saying that, using his arm as a pivot, she swung his body.

"Woah."

Even as he said that, his body was already dancing in mid-air. And it was at an abnormal height at which he was flung up,

"What monstrous strength!"

Taito retorted instinctively.

A smile then floated on Gekkou's face,

"Well done."

He picked up his sword. And with that, he went thrusting towards Himea.

On seeing that, Taito,

"Himea."

He yelled.

And she looked up at him.

"Right."

She called out. And jumped. She readily jumped to a tremendous height to where Taito had been flung to,

"I've come ~"

On seeing that, Taito,

"What jumping power."

For some reason, on hearing his remark, she became angry and puffed out her cheeks.

"Now, there are other things that you can praise, right? You've just reunited with a girl after a long while, right? At this rate, you won't be popular, you know?"

"As a matter of fact, I'm not popular."

"Ahaha. So, you aren't popular huh. Well, it can't be helped. That's the kind of curse I've placed....."

"Eh!?"

"I'm kidding, I'm kidding, seriously."

"Now, which is it!?"

As he said that, *ahaha*, Himea laughed again. And then she touched Taito's head, and with a look of sheer joy on her face.

"But you're popular in my eyes, isn't that good enough ? I love you, Taito."

She said.

Being told that by someone who didn't seem human --- no, she was truly not a human however ---, an extraordinary beautiful girl.

Taito, despite that,

"....."

For some reason, he could not answer readily the way he used to.

His feelings of love for Himea from the past probably remained. That feeling of comradeship remained strongly.

But, for just an instant.

"....."

For just an instant, the face of another person flashed into his mind.

Even he himself was surprised. It didn't really matter to him one way or the other, however. Since he had never thought of such things before. Being with the girl he likes, and having his love reciprocated, and what would come next and what would follow, he had never seriously considered these things like an adult.

And then.

She looked at the expression on his face. Himea looked at him intently with her deep crimson eyes. Having realized that she had seen through him somehow, Taito fretted a little.

But, in response to that, she said. With a slight smile on her face, suddenly,

"..... I'll give you something good."

She said.

"Something good?"

At Taito's question, she nodded.

"That's right. Something good."

Following that, she gave a tap to Taito's chest.

In a flash.

"Hot."

An intense amount of pain started running along his right hand.

Taito then looked at his own hand. As he did so --- from the tip of his fingers to somewhere around his elbow, before he knew it, he could see that his arm was engulfed with pure white flames.

"What, what's this? It's a little, terribly hot though?"

Once again, she smiled.

"It's hot of course. They are flames from the **TenkaiMartes Plane**[13]. If anything other than the **Tenma Martes Devil**[14] touches this **Gouka**[15], it will vaporize in an instant."

In response to those words,

"Eh? Tenkai? Tenma? What's that?"

Taito asked in succession, but somehow, those questions seemed unimportant and she ignored them.

"It's a forbidden spell that even us **<< Most Ancient Vampires Sorcerers >>** can't use. Three hundred years ago, the first **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>** to make a contract with the **Martes Tenma Devil** used these flames and had his whole upper body burned into nothingness in a flash. But, if it's you....."

However, at that juncture, for now, Taito understood the deal with the white flames on his arm.

That's why.

"Ahh, so that's it."

"Yeah, that's it. Now, use these flames and square off with that fellow. Fight off that impertinent Mr. Black Hair..... and protect me."

She said.

And Taito looked down.

Looking at the figure of Gekkou who's holding onto his sword and looking up at him.

And then,

"Let me tell you. This is some awesome power, you know? If you surrender, I'll forgive you."

However, Gekkou said.

"Dream on."

"As expected."

"I'll kill you."

"That's my line."

At that moment, Taito landed on the ground. At the same time, he brought his left hand forward, and pulled back his right arm on which the white flames dwelled. And with that, he formed a fist with his right hand and thrust forward to release the flames of the **Martes Tenma Devil**.

"Die, Gekkou."

As he did that, Gekkou reacted as well, and strongly kicked twice at the ground.

Taito knew that movement. It was, if he remembered correctly, a fencing move called Ballestra. It was a move that puts momentum forward into a lunge to close in, and then thrust.

Gekkou's series of movements were surprisingly smooth and agile.

But Taito was not perturbed. His flaming thrust should be faster. Looking at the tip of Gekkou's sword. Gauging the distance from the tip of the sword. Gekkou stretched his body, and his sword closed in further, but even so, perhaps within a hair's breadth, Taito's attack should hit Gekkou before the sword reached him.

That's why Taito said as he delivered his punch.

"You're slow, dunce."

On hearing that, Gekkou also said.

"The dunce is you."

Gekkou thrust his sword forward. Straight at Taito. But it shouldn't reach him. That's why Taito's fist went in , indifferent to the thrust.

And then, the flames --- the glowing white flames that was blindingly bright seemed about to be released from his fist.

However, all of a sudden, the path of Gekkou's sword changed. The low sword stance which made it appear to be slithering along the ground earlier, suddenly swung upwards. And then, it went piercing into Taito's white, flaming fist,

"**Wicked Blade**[Spell Error], activate Spell Error!"

He said. Following that, the flames which were residing in Taito's fist disappeared suddenly. It was as if they were sucked up by Gekkou's black sword.

"It's my win."

Gekkou smiled.

But Taito opened up the fist that was pierced through by the sword. And as if to wrest the sword away from Gekkou, he gripped the blade of the sword. And then,

"Hah. A swordsman without a sword, who did you win against again? Don't get carried away by your conceit."

On top of that, he clenched his left fist. With that clenched fist, he attempted to strike Gekkou's face.

But Gekkou raised the elbow of the hand that was holding onto the sword to receive the blow. It was as if he raised his elbow to smash into Taito's fist.

But Taito was unconcerned. If his fist got smashed, it would heal up immediately. With that, he made contact and pressed into Gekkou's elbow. Somehow, it seemed like Taito's arm strength was slightly stronger. At this rate, he could grab hold of his neck and make him pass out.

Taito thought.

But Gekkou did not yield. Even as Taito pushed his arm forward, Gekkou reciprocated equally.

In response to that, Taito, while pressing his fist with all his strength, began,

"Now, that's enough, just surrender, Gekkou. It's your loss."

Maintaining his appearance, with his usual impertinent face, Gekkou said.

"Fool. The one who has lost is you, Kurogane Taito. For a small fry, don't..... get ahead of yourself."

And with that, seconds passed.

And from behind them, Himea and Mirai,

"Let me hel....."

Instantly.

""No need.""

In a gross manner as if they were on good terms, both Taito and Gekkou yelled the same words in unison.

Gekkou scowled and glared at Taito. He glared at his opponent with a look in his eyes that said how pissed he was down to his very core.

And Taito glared back. *Damn you, there's no reason for you to look at me like that, duh!*, he glowered back in that manner.

And then, at that moment, a voice said.

Suddenly, not from Himea, Mirai, Gekkou, nor Taito, but from another person ---

"Then preferably, I shall have everyone die, how's that?"

The voice reverberated in the park of the night.

On hearing that,

""Aahh? Who is it!?""

Once again, Taito and Gekkou said in unison. Following that, they turned their glares. With a piercing glare, they looked in the direction of the voice.

The voice came from the direction of the swing.

But right now, there was no swing there. No, the place where the swing should have been was twisting and churning, and from that distortion, a single, gross, leg stepped out.

Following that, two, then three, of the same kind of legs emerged from the narrow space, and before long, a humongous spider appeared before them.

But Taito was not surprised by that.

Rather, he was more surprised by the figure of the man on top of the spider, and as such, he was not the least shocked by this abnormal phenomenon taking place .

The man on top of the spider he's riding.

Since that man had the very same face as the conceited Mr. Genius Taito he was squaring off with right now, Kurenai Gekkou.

On seeing that, Taito began,

"..... Gekkou? Eh? Eh? Why are there two of you?"

He said.

But Himea started,

"..... that, that's not it, Taito. He, he isn't Gekkou."

She said something inexplicable to him. However, from the sound of her voice, he could tell that the situation was unfavorable to them.

Her voice was quivering again. Quivering in fear. He turned his head around. And looked in the direction of Himea. Her face looked drained and was on the verge of tears.

Taito asked.

"Then, who is it?"

And she looked up at the man on top of the spider, and said. In a quivering voice, she said.

"It's, it's Hinata..... the man who had killed Taito..... and had taken me away..... he is..... coming for me."

She said.

Hearing those words, he turned around. And looked at the man on top of the spider, the man who looked identical to Gekkou.

Identical to Gekkou --- but, the depth of his eyes were of a completely different kind.

They were cold, emotionless like the dead, dark like the night with no sign of despair, joy, nor vitality.

Different from Gekkou, there was no trace of humanity in them.

This fellow, Hinata, Taito thought.

This fellow.

"....."

This fellow kidnapped Himea, and for these nine years , had done some terrible things to her, Taito thought.

And then.

"....."

Taito decided to kill him.

He would let him feel the same taste of humiliation as Himea, and then kill him.

"....."

At the instant he thought of those things from the depths of his heart, the flames on his right hand ignited once more. Resisting the power of Gekkou's sword, the flames ignited once more.

Gekkou looked at him from the side. And then,

"Horh."

He said. Looking in the direction of Taito,

"An impressive amount of hatred in that power."

He said. And with that, he drew back his sword. He further went on to lower his elbow, and lightly pressed against Taito's chest.

And then, he looked up in the direction of Hinata.

"..... but, don't you interfere. I'm going to be the one to kill him."

Gekkou said.

On hearing that, Taito frowned.

"Ahh? Don't shit with me. I'm going....."

But that was interrupted by Gekkou.

"Shut up, trash. That Kurenai Hinata..... the inferior twin little brother of mine is my prey....."

In a low voice.

He could hear the seemingly quivering voice. No, in truth, it was really quivering perhaps.

With an intense rage.

With deep hatred.

"Little brother?"

Taito asked.

"....."

But, Gekkou said nothing. Even though he wasn't sure what had happened between the two of them, it was, without a doubt, something huge. He could feel the extent of Gekkou's hatred even from behind him.

And then Hinata --- Kurenai Gekkou's twin brother, Kurenai Hinata, had a mocking smile forming at his lips, and he said.

"..... who's the inferior one, I wonder? Well, I have no interest in proving that though..... Nii-san, you're still crawling around at that level huh."

However, on hearing that, Gekkou,

"....."

As expected, he said nothing.

He merely looked up at Hinata. Glowering, he merely looked up at Hinata.

And then Mirai said. With a worried face, she said.

"Are you ok? Gekkou."

On hearing those words, Hinata smiled again.

"Ahh, I see, you've taken in my secondhand thing Mirai under your wing. So, you've acquired that secondhand thing and planned to beat me with it?"

Mirai shrieked at those words.

"What do you mean by secondhand!? I haven't even made a contract with Hinata....."

But, at that juncture, Gekkou said.

"Shut up, Mirai. I'll return the humiliation you've suffered in a while. So just shut up for a while."

After saying that, Gekkou adopted a sword stance. He lowered his body. And poured in all his hatred into that sword. Gathering all his strength into his body like a springboard.

"Mirai..... can you do something about that spider?"

As he said that, a sly smile that hardly resembled that of a child floated on Mirai's face.

"Who do you think I am?"

On hearing that, Gekkou smiled. He smiled delightedly. And then,

"..... you're my..... reassuring partner."

"Eh?"

"Well, let's do it. I shall kill Hinata. You will kill the spider."

"Eh, erm, got got got, got it."

Mirai nodded twice.

"Let's go!"

"Uhn!"

And then, the two of them jumped.

From behind the two of them, Himea said.

Grabbing hold of Taito's clothes,

"..... let, let's escape, Taito. Now's the time. They, they can't win. He's too powerful."

She said with a quivering voice.

That voice.

The always strong-willed young girl who was not a human and known as a **<< Most Ancient Sorcerer >>**[Vampire], a being that was probably really powerful.

Looking at that Himea who had conferred him the power of immortality, and the power of flames, one who possesses such awesome powers, Taito became gloomy at hearing her weakened voice, and at seeing her nearing the verge of tears just from hearing that fellow's voice.

He tried imagining what Himea had undergone through that fellow's hands. But, it was probably something beyond what he could imagine, something so terrible that it made him gloomy.

By taking a peek at his own gloominess that had arisen , suddenly, he understood various things.

The life he had led until now, the things he had thought about until now.

It was not something tremendous like he was getting enlightened about life at the young age of sixteen, but all of a sudden, his heart swelled from the understanding he had obtained on various things.

That's why he said.

Without turning around towards Himea, he said.

"You know, Himea. I....."

"Uhn?"

"Ever since I had readily forgotten about Himea, I merely led an ordinary life up till now, totally forgetting about the thoughts that Himea had held, merely having aimless fun, and slacking around.

Himea then started,

"That, that can't be hel....."

Interrupting that, Taito said.

"That's no excuse. I had said that I wouldn't forget. That I wouldn't forget about Himea. I had said that I would definitely come save you. But, I forgot all that easily. Living every single day aimlessly, having fun like an idiot, not working hard in studies and such, playing games and reading manga, and saying stupid things like not having a dream for the future. But, but, you know, there was actually one thing that I worked a little harder than the rest. There was this thing that I worked a little harder than the rest. Well, you might even call it a little childish, but I did karate, you know. Ah, you know what's karate? It's a kind of martial arts. And I was moving forward pretty well with it. Before I got injured, Sensei had high expectations from me. And I was really ecstatic about it. *Alright, I'm going to win at the inter-highs*, I said. Thinking about it now, for one who can't stick to anything for long, it was something I worked really hard at....."

At that juncture, Taito turned around. He turned around towards the direction where Himea, shaking in fear, was. And then he said.

Gazing at her, he said.

"But, that was definitely something I did for Himea's sake. I just understood that a little while ago. Even though I've already forgotten about Himea and was just having silly fun every day. But even so, I probably remembered it from somewhere within my heart, that if I were to meet you again..... if I were to meet you again, I would definitely protect you. I would not let anyone lay hands on you again. If someone comes to hurt you, I would become strong and beat them up, I thought. No, although I thought like that in an idiotic manner. For such a weak human as I to say such high and mighty words like an idiot....."

But, on hearing that, Himea,

"Nope."

She said.

"Nope, it's not like that."

She said. And she gazed at him. She was no longer shaking. She was only gazing at him. Gazing at him with a face that was nearing the verge of tears. But that was not a sad face. Rather, it was a somewhat happy face.

"I've always..... known about it, you know? I've always known that Taito would not forget about me. I've always known Taito would become stronger and come save me. That's why I've always waited without going mad."

Without going mad.

That was what she just said.

Without going mad.

Those words sounded a little exaggerated. To the Taito who was just an ordinary student a little while ago, that is a few hours ago, they sounded a little exaggerated.

But she was really just a step away from going mad, he thought.

If it were Taito who had been imprisoned in that same place where she was imprisoned for nine years, he would probably have gone mad easily.

It was impossible for him to forgive. It was impossible for him to run away from that fellow.

That's why, a little longer.

Just a little longer.

"..... after waiting for nine whole years, can you wait for me for another five minutes? I'll go beat him up and come back after that."

It was terribly selfish of him. Considering the despair he had seen in her, it was terribly selfish of him.

However, on hearing that, she looked intently at him. She looked intently at him with a happy face that was on the verge of tears. And then,

"Uhn."

She nodded.

"Alright. I'll also fight."

"Don't force yourself."

On hearing that, she gave a tap to Taito's head.

"Don't be thick-headed. Taito alone can't win."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah. But if it's the two of us..... if it's the two of us, it might be possible. During these nine years, Taito has become really strong..... cool....."

As she said that, she touched Taito's head again. She gently touched the back of Taito's neck.

It seems like that was something caused by her. She touched something on Taito's neck.

She touched the scar on his neck, where she had injected **Black Magic Poison** with her teeth.

That action caused him to feel a little flurried, but since this was not the time to tarry around, he tensed up his body and turned around.

And the both of them looked in the direction of Hinata .

The short, cute Mirai was assaulted by the spider.

The spider raised up one of its humongous legs and was about to crush Mirai by stepping on her.

"Look out!"

Even as Taito yelled, it was already too late. The spider's leg came crashing down onto Mirai.

But she received that readily with a single hand.

"Uwaah, this is heavy....."

But, at that moment, Gekkou jumped onto that spider leg which Mirai was holding up against. All of a sudden, with the addition of Gekkou's weight, the spider leg became heavier.

"Ugh, hey! Didn't I say that it's heavy?"

Mirai shrieked.

But Gekkou did not look back. He headed straight towards Hinata. He readied his sword, and lunged.

The spider came assaulting Gekkou with another of its legs,

"Don't interfere with Gekkou!"

Mirai raised her left hand and fired off her lightning. And blasted that one leg away.

Ignoring everything that was happening, Gekkou advanced.

And Hinata said.

"Hahaha. You guys are kind of desperate. But Nii-san won't be able to get close to me."

And then he waved his right hand.

Instantly.

That thing arose.

That same shockwave of light that had blasted away Taito's upper body in the past was born from Hinata's hand, about to be used for attacking Gekkou.

But.

"..... exorcise, **Spell Error**
Wicked Blade"

Gekkou muttered. And he swung his sword. He then sliced apart that shockwave, and dashed into the opening created.

On seeing that, Hinata's expression changed slightly. He raised an eyebrow,

"Heh. Seems like you've grown a little."

A smile floated on Gekkou's face.

"Well, just a little though. I put in a little effort and before I knew it, I progressed twenty thousand steps ahead of you."

As he said that, he made a thrust with his sword.

And he pierced through Hinata's chest. After ascertaining that, Gekkou started,

"This is it, Hinata. With the curse from this sword, go burn in hell..... Elu, Eluelut....."

He murmured something. As he did that, the color of the blade of **Spell Error** **Wicked Blade** started changing.

The black blade was filled with a blood red ---

However, suddently at that moment.

"..... haha. Twenty thousand steps? You mean twenty thousand steps behind me, right?"

As he said that, Hinata's figure dispersed.

And before he knew it, Hinata appeared behind Gekkou.

"With this level of power, it's nothing to get overjoyed about."

He stretched out his hand. He stretched out his hand towards Gekkou's face.

Gekkou turned around. And scowled. It was at a distance which he couldn't dodge.

Even if it's that egoistical, genius superman who excels in both studies and sports, it was at a distance which he couldn't dodge.

And then Mirai yelled.

"Ge, Gekkou!?"

Hinata laughed.

"Haha, you've chosen the wrong master."

And then Hinata waved his hand.

And the shockwave of light came forth. Facing the direction of Gekkou's face, the shockwave came forth.

And then.

"..... make way, idiot."

Taito jumped in and came kicking at Gekkou from the side.

In a flash.

The shockwave was fired.

Unable to even scream out, Taito's upper body was blasted into nothingness readily. With that, he came rolling down from the back of the spider. As he rolled down, gradually, he could feel his upper body starting its regeneration.

And as he fell head first to the ground, and at the time when he would have his neck broken from the impending impact, he raised his two hands to guard against that.

"Woah, geez. I almost died twice because of that."

On seeing that.

Gekkou, who was kicked down from the spider by Taito, said.

"..... who, who told you to help?"

"I didn't help you. I kicked you because you were in my way."

"Small fries shouldn't interfere."

"Hehe. Excuse me for dampening your spirits. If you can kill that fellow easily, I wouldn't have bothered. But, you were the one who was about to be killed."

On hearing what Taito said, Gekkou's scowl deepened increasingly.

Anger, hatred, then despair.

On hearing that, Hinata smiled again.

"Despite being ahead twenty thousand steps, you need four people huh. As expected of Nii-san."

At his provocation, Mirai shouted.

"Aren't you also using a spider! You disagreeable idiot! Pervert hippo!"

She yelled.

But Gekkou said nothing. He merely gazed at Hinata, and softly,

"Hey, Kurogane Taito."

He called Taito's name.

On hearing that, Taito,

"Huh?"

He replied.

And Gekkou said.

"Lend me your hand for a bit."

"Ah? You finally became honest?"

At that question, Gekkou's scowl deepened even further,

"..... yeah. This is really peeving but..... my current powers are not a match for him..... but I'll terminate him here. Even while he's making a fool out of me, I won't go down like an idiot."

"That goes the same for me."

"Then, lend me your hand."

"Alright. So, what's the plan?"

Gekkou shifted his eyes to take a glance in the direction of Himea behind them. And then,

"The power that you got from that woman a while ago. ..... those flames, can you use them again?"

As he was asked that, Taito,

"Ah, let me see. Can I use them....."

He tried focusing his concentration on his right hand. As he did that, a change appeared immediately in his hand. It underwent an excruciating amount of pain. His hand underwent an excruciating amount of pain, as if it was getting burned by something.

"Seems like I can."

Taito said.

A smile then surfaced on Gekkou's lips.

"Then, you would be the one to do him in. And as you do that....."

Finishing his words, Himea started speaking from behind them.

"As he does that, after getting vaporized, as Hinata is about to escape by turning into fog, you would strike at the core of his life with your sword? That's a good plan. For a human, you have good eyes. It seems like you managed to see what that monster did at that instant a while ago."

Gekkou, without changing the expression on his face,

"Of course. I can always see through the actions of that little brother of mine."

On hearing those words, Taito and Himea went,

""Hmm.""

They acknowledged at exactly the same time. And then frantically,

"Ah, that was you know, that, you know? We're not making fun of you, you know?"

And followed by Himea,

"Yeah, that's right, yeah? Aahh, I suppose it's along those lines though....."

And with a tone that made him seemed unbothered by all that, Gekkou said.

"Ahh, it's fine, I didn't take it to heart at all. I'll just kill you guys later."

""You're taking it to heart, duh!""

Their foolish talk ended promptly.

Hinata looked down at them.

"Now, that's all you've got, right? Then, let's end it. Except for Saitohimea, I'll kill everyone. In fact, I'm willing to let the three of you go if you would hand over Saitohimea, you know? I'm getting tired of bullying the weak."

He said.

But neither Taito, Himea, nor Gekkou said anything in response to that.

Himea said.

"Taito..... can you get close to Hinata?"

And he nodded.

"I think it's not a problem. I can still revive three times. ....."

By the way, in this very park, he had already died thrice.

The first was during the fight with Gekkou, when an artery in his wrist was sliced together with his fist when it was sliced off his hand.

The second was from Mirai's lightning which struck through his chest.

And the third was from a while ago, when he jumped in to save Gekkou and ended up getting his upper body blasted into nothingness by Hinata.

Therefore, he could only revive three more times.

The fourth death after this would be a permanent death.

And then Himea's face clouded in doubt.

"Three times..... in other words, if you need to use up one life to use the flames of the **Martes Tenma Devil**, you can only receive Hinata's attacks two more times..... ah, we should give up after all. This won't do. It's too dangero...."

But Taito then said.

"It would be fine. I'll get it done without a glitch. This time, I can't let it end like the way it did in the past. I'll protect you properly this time."

"But."

"I said it's not a problem."

"..... uhn."

She pressed her forehead worriedly against Taito's shoulder, and Gekkou, while looking at that,

"Hah. I've seen too much melodrama."

He said in an exasperated voice.

"Well, let's get on with it. Mirai and I will distract Hinata. Take advantage of that."

Followed by Himea,

"I'll also do everything I can to protect Taito..... that's why, Taito, don't die."

She said.

On hearing that, Taito nodded,

"I got it. I won't die. Don't worry. This time, I shall protect you from him."

As he said that, he started running.

The spider reacted. It extended its leg, attempting to kill Taito.

And then Gekkou,

"Mirai. Bring that fella up onto the spider."

"Alroight alroight."

She replied, and then fired off her lightning.

And it blast the spider's foot off again. But, on top of that, a large mass of spider silk was shot out from the spider's spinnerets, in an attempt to restrain Taito's body.

"Restrain(Aruto)."

Himea shouted. And all the silk were stopped. Gekkou then sliced apart those silk with his sword.

Taking advantage of that opening, the two of them darted through.

As expected, Hinata looked at the scene before him with a relaxed expression.

"..... this is just futile resistance. Just by looking at your movements, I can't see how you can be my match with just that level."

However, Gekkou,

"Now. Jump, Kurogane!"

Taito nodded. And then he jumped, onto the body of the spider.

At the same time, Gekkou also flung himself up onto the spider.

Once again, Hinata was about to wave his hand. About to unleash his shockwave.

As if to protect him, Gekkou stepped forward. Swinging his sword. And sever the shockwave.

In the meantime, Taito was closing to a place where he could kill Hinata.

Without getting killed even once, he closed into a place where he could kill Hinata.

It was perfect synchronization.

With that, he could kill Hinata.

He could kill the monster.

Taito clenched his right fist. As he did that, it burst into white flames. The flames of some unknown being known as **Martes Tenma Devil** dwelled in his hand.

By the time Hinata noticed those flames, it was too late .

"Hn? What's that?"

Taito smiled,

"Well, what is it, I wonder?"

While saying that, he pulled his fist back. And with all his might, he thrust it forward.

Instantly.

Dogon (sfx), a sound went off, and from Taito's right shoulder to his left side at the waist level, his entire body was destroyed. Burned by the scorching flames, it was blasted into oblivion.

"Gaha."

He moaned.

His face contorted from the excruciating pain.

But, he endured that pain and looked. He looked in the direction where Hinata was when he unleashed his white flames.

He had fired off his flames at a timing that he definitely wouldn't be able to dodge.

Anything struck by the flames will burn and vaporize until nothing is left, it seemed. That was what Himea had said. Except for the **Martes Devil** (Tenma), there was no living being that could deal with these flames, it seemed.

Those flames attacked Hinata.

And then, Hinata's body ---

"....."

Before the body of this monster could burn,

"Resentment Spider" (Kuraide)

Hinata said softly.

The spider then moved all its remaining legs forward to block off the flames in an attempt to protect Hinata.

The flames struck the spider's legs.

Instantly.

The flames engulfed the entire body of the spider and readily vaporized it into nothingness.

"....."

But Hinata was unscathed.

The flames did not touch him.

As the spider had disappeared, Hinata landed on the ground and looked at them. With a slightly guarded face, he looked at them, and his eyes shifted towards the direction of Himea,

"..... heh, that power is a little dangerous, perhaps. Its worth surprises me a little. Did you get it from the **Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer**? So unfair. After interrogating for so long, and yet, I didn't receive anything of that sort."

But, there was no time to listen to his talk.

Since he had avoided that one shot, and with Taito's hand shown, the situation was heading for the worse.

Taito could only revive two more times.

He could only use the flames of the **Martes Tenma Devil** two more.....

"....."

But, at that moment.

"In any case, right now, it seems like you are the most dangerous person."

As he said that, Hinata pointed two fingers at him. Instantly, Taito could feel a clump of invisible air-like mass passing through his chest.

He looked down at his chest. And at the area where his heart was, a hole, the size of the cap of a plastic bottle, had opened.

"Cough."

He coughed and spewed out blood.

Of course, such a wound would close up immediately, but with this, he had lost one more life.

Only one more time.

He could use the flames of the **Martes Tenma Devil** one more time.

Gekkou said.

"Hurry up and shoot, idiot."

Following that, Himea shouted.

"Run, Taito!! You no longer have enough lives!"

After listening to both of them.

"....."

Taito clenched his fist. And once again, the white flames dwelt in his fist.

But, at that moment,

"I won't allow it."

Hinata disappeared. And then once again, he appeared right before Taito. He place his hand on Taito's stomach,

"Disintegrate."

He said.

And it was just as he said.

Taito's lower body from below the stomach disintegrated into oblivion, and he lost his last chance.

He lost his last expandable life.

He could no longer fire off the flames of **Tenma Martes Devil**.

If he were to die again.

If he were to die again,

"....."

It would be a true death.

Hinata smiled. He smiled as he looked at the Taito who could no longer do anything.

"As I recalled, if you die seven times in fifteen minutes, it would be the end of you, right. Now, how many times have you died? I didn't really keep track but..... but, if I start killing you about two thousand times in the next second, it should be enough, right?"

As he said that, he picked up Taito's body. With his lower body still yet to be regenerated after the disintegration, he picked up his upper body.

On seeing that, Himea yelled.

She yelled again.

"Wa, wait! Wait Hinata! Taito had already died six times! There's no more next time! So, so wait!"

She yelled with all her strength.

On hearing that, Hinata smiled again. As if he was looking at some trash, he smiled.

"Uh-n? Doesn't this seem like the same conversation we have had nine years ago? Good grief, you guys haven't changed a bit. But, it's fine. If you wish for it, I'll let him live once more. But let's make a promise. This time round, you have to properly listen to me. You would have to do as I say, and become my slave, this is the promise."

Hinata said.

This was just the same as that time.

Taito did not have the power to protect Himea.

That's why Himea was on the verge of tears, and with a quivering voice that had all but given up, she had no choice but to listen to Hinata.

"..... I understand. I will become your slave or whatever it is..... so please..... please let Taito go."

No, she was already crying.

Looking in the direction of Taito.

Looking in the direction of Taito, whom she had been waiting to meet again for the past nine years.

Looking in the direction of Taito, whom she had been waiting, waiting, all this while to meet, and at last, when she was just finally able to do that.

Even though she was smiling so much just a while ago. Saying how happy she was to be able to meet Taito. She was so happy that she was on the verge of tears. Even

though she was in such high spirits, crying, and hugging him at the same time while saying how she wouldn't let him leave her again.

The same thing happened again.

It was just the same as nine years ago.

But, does such an unreasonable story even exist?

Is it ok for such an unreasonable story to take place?

She has waited for nine years in total despair, right?

Waiting for days and months throughout that nine years, right?

"....."

Even for a sixteen year old idiot who had only been living in tranquility, he knew that it was such a long time that it could have driven her mad.

He knew that it was such a long time that if she had been crying out in madness, her tears would have dried up a long time ago.

And right now, she must be thinking about the same thing.

She must be thinking of saving the powerless him.

In response to that.

"....."

Is there such an idiotic thing, Taito thought.

Isn't it really bad for such an idiotic thing to happen?, Taito thought.

Don't shit me.

Don't shit with me, he wanted to cry out.

That's why he said.

"Don't do it."

He said.

"Don't do it, Himea. Don't say things like 'becoming a slave' so lightly."

He said.

And then Himea looked at him. With tears overflowing, she looked at him.

"But, but."

"There's no need for you to become a slave. Don't bother about me, and just get out of here. It'll be fine. I'll do something about th....."

But, at that moment, Hinata gave a powerful punch to Taito's slightly regenerated stomach.

"Shut up, powerless worm. For a powerless lower being, you are not in a position to speak, right?"

With that, Taito's words stopped.

Himea screamed again.

"Wa, wa, wait! I'm the one you want, right? I will listen to what you say, so please....."

But Taito,

"Stop that, Himea! There's no need to say such things to this fella! I'll do something about this piece of shit, so just quickly get out of here!"

He yelled.

And then Hinata said. Looking intently at Taito, Hinata said.

"Do something about it? You? The powerless you? How can a powerless being like you howl in such a manner, I wonder. Are you blind to the situation? Why is she taking on such a servile attitude, are you an idiot who doesn't get it? Please, just shut up. To her, you are.... .."

But, at that point, Taito had already stopped listening to Hinata's words.

And then he looked at the crying Himea. The despair which would occur from here on. She was shaking in fear from the thought of having to return to that dark prison.

But, looking at that face, Taito smiled.

And then.

"..... don't cry. It'll be fine. I'll be the one protecting you this time."

Taito said.

"....."

Looking at Taito's face, she seemed to have realized it. What Taito was saying. What he was about to do.

And then.

"N, no."

She said.

"Stop."

She said.

But, on hearing that, Taito smiled.

And then, he stopped looking at her face. Since by looking at her, he would have some lingering attachment .

He would be wishing to live a little longer.

But, really, he had lived for a long enough time.

Since he should already have been killed by Hinata nine years ago.

And a while ago, he should have been killed by the truck that had knocked him down.

That's why, right here, the life he had was thanks to Himea.

If so, it's ok to return it, he thought.

In order to save her, it's ok to return it, he thought.

If he could, even if it's just for a little bit, return her the nine years that she had lost, so that she is able to smile from here on.

If he could, even if it's just for a little bit, bury that nine years of despair that she had experienced, it's ok to return this life to her.

"....."

And in order to accomplish that, it was necessary to erase this fellow here.

In order to return Himea to a life where she could smile, it was necessary to kill this monster.

That's why Taito clenched his right fist.

And then he said.

"Oiy, monster."

"Uhn?"

"What do you think this is?"

As he said that, Taito showed him his fist that was once again starting to spew out white flames.

On seeing that, Hinata's face changed a little. And then ,

"Fool. You won't be able to do....."

But at that moment, Taito said.

"I can, id~iot. I don't want to forget....."

With his hand.

He grabbed hold of Hinata's face with the hand in which the white flames dwelt.

And then.

"I've decided that I don't want to forget Himea again!"

And then Taito released his flames.

And once again, *dokan (sfx)*, a popping sound rang out.

He could feel at the same time, that the right half of his body was blasted away.

There was no pain.

There was no pain at all.

The only thing he could feel was the overwhelming sensation of impending death.

"Taito!?"

He could tell that Himea was hollering.

"No, no, noooooo

"..... I did it."

And then, Gekkou said.

Looking down at him with pitiful eyes,

"..... for a small fry, you've done well."

"Hahah. Don't make me puk....."

But, at that moment, Taito could no longer say anything. He could feel his vision turning pitch black. He could feel everything turning pitch black.

And then, *aahh, I'm dying*, he thought.

This time round, I'm really dying, he thought.

But, he felt neither sad nor bitter.

Since, this time round, he kept his word.

He was dying from saving Himea.

He was dying from protecting her.

In view of that. *This, isn't this something awesome*, he thought.

The only regret he had, was, for the last time.

It was not being able to see Himea's face for the last time.....

But, even that thought vanished.

Everything and anything was smeared with pitch blackness.

And then.

"....."

And then, Kurogane Taito died.

Himea rushed towards Taito, and hugged his body.

She hugged the ragged body of Taito that had its upper right half blasted into oblivion.

But, it never did regenerate again.

It didn't regenerate!?

In response to that,

"No, no, this can't be..... such a thing..... no..... I've finally being able to meet you at last..... even though I didn't ask for this..... why, why did things turn out this way? Why did things turn out this way..... and not any other....."

But, she could no longer say anything more than that. She could only sob. Her words subsided as a result of her sobs.

Looking at that figure.

"....."

Gekkou looked down at that figure.

He looked down at the figure of Saitohimea who was hugging the bloodied body of Taito, weeping uncontrollably.

"....."

After looking down at her for a while, he picked up his fallen scabbard and sheathed his sword.

Mirai rushed up to him.

"What, what happened?"

On hearing that, Gekkou said. Gazing at the scenery of the park where the fight had occurred.

"..... hm. In the end, it's my win."

"Ugh, I'm not talking about that duh ~! What about that immortal guy?"

"He's dead."

"Eeeeeeehhhhhhhhhh. You're kidding? I thought he's immortal, isn't he?"

"Doesn't seem so. Jeez, that's why small fries are bothersome."

"No no, that's why I was saying, it's not about that! Erm, but, what should we do?"

Mirai asked.

Gekkou thought. He thought for a while.

And then he said.

"Oiy, Saitohimea."

He called out of the name of the monster, the name of the **Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer**.

But she didn't turn around.

Overwhelmed by despair.

Overwhelmed by a deep despair, it seemed like she couldn't hear him at all.

But Gekkou was unconcerned.

Facing her,

"You're a criminal. You're targeted by organizations in the world. If you don't escape promptly, I'm going to kill you, you know?"

"....."

But, as expected, she did not turn around. Hugging the body of Taito, it seemed like she was never going to move another inch from that place.

But, with regards to that, Gekkou was not bothered in the slightest.

Looking intently at Himea, he continued.

"But, if say, if say you're willing to let me keep you as a pet, I'll be willing to protect you. If you listen to everything I say, accede to my orders and do as I say, I'll keep you as a pet, just like Mirai....."

"I'm no pppeeettttttttttttttttttttttt!"

Mirai yelled.

At that moment, Saitohimea turned around. With a sobbing face. Looking at him with her deep crimson, piercing eyes,

"..... ha, haha, what's that?"

She said.

"What the hell is that? In the end, this is the elder brother that's just like his little brother? Then, do as you please. Even when I've lost everything, even when you've taken everything away from me, if that's still not enough, do as you please. What do you want to do? Do you want to cut my head off and examine the inside of my brain? Or do you want to disembowel me and look at my insides? Or do you want to satisfy your foolish male desires? Do as you please. There's no longer..... there's no longer any meaning to my life....."

But, Gekkou merely ignored the words of that noisy woman and continued.

"Alright, it's decided then. You are my slave. You, and Mirai, and that idiot sleeping over there, that Kurogane Taito, the three of you are my subordinates. Then, I will do this shitty, bothersome job of protecting you. From the military. As well as from the **Church**. Now, since that's decided, let's get back to the student council room. I'll open a dimensional door, and go wake that idiot up."

On hearing those words.

"Eh!?"

Saitohimea said.

But as expected, Gekkou ignored her.

"It's enough with just the head. There's someone who can revive him with just his head alone. Well, the price to pay is a pretty heavy one though..... anyway you'll be the one paying, right?"

As he said that, he started walking.

On hearing that.

On hearing that, Saitohimea,

"Eh? Eh? Wait a minute. Eeehhhh? That means, that, Taito can be brought back to life?"

She asked him.

But in response to that, Gekkou,

"....."

He did not reply.

Dondon, dondon, he walked away.

"Hey, did you hear me!?"

"I didn't hear you. When I give my orders, just get your butt moving, trash. Aahh, I'll tell you one thing though, if the body rots, it can't be brought back to life."

On hearing those words,

"Eh? Ah, wait a min..... I'll tear the head off..... I'm sorrrryyyy Taitooooooooooooooooo!?"

Her voice came from behind him.

And also from the side,

"..... some~how, some~how, I'm slowly getting to understand Gekkou a little bit more ~"

His pet said annoyingly.

In response to that, Gekkou,

"....."

As expected, he had nothing to say to that.

He merely stopped in his tracks, and took a little bit of time to look at the place where his little brother, Hinata, had disappeared.

And then he looked at Mirai, Saitohimea, and the freshly severed head of the idiot.

And finally, he looked up at the sky. Looking up at the night sky. And then with an exasperated voice,

"..... jeez, why do the number of idiots keep increasing ? This is indeed a shitty plot."

He muttered.

He sighed.

The moon had risen in the night sky which he was looking up at. A new moon. The moon was shining brightly on them. Gazing at that shining moon for a while, unexpectedly,

"..... so May has already come to an end."

Kurenai Gekkou thought.

Epilogue

"....."

As he opened his eyes, a ceiling was before him. A ceiling he was familiar with. With a fluorescent lamp covered by a round cover, and white wallpaper. At the end of that white wallpaper, was a thin, seemingly dirty, yellowish spot. A memory of his childhood in which he was making a ruckus about how fearful of that spot he was and couldn't sleep alone surfaced.

Looking at that spot.

"....."

Following that, once again, he looked at the fluorescent lamp.

"..... what the heck, everything was a dream, huh."

Kurogane Taito muttered in a groaning tone.

And he sat up. As he did that, a wave of pain swept across his head,

"Argghh."

He groaned. Clutching his head,

"Shit, did I catch a cold?"

As he said that, he ascertained the place he was in. It was indeed his own room.

His own bed, and the study desk for kids which he received during elementary school. On top of that was his mobile phone charger, but, his mobile was not being charged.

"Ah-reh, where's my mobile....."

At that moment, he felt something that was strangely hard next to his hip, and he moved his hand to touch it. It was his mobile that was inside his pocket. He had actually been sleeping in his school uniform. Looking into his futon, he saw his crumpled pants.

Looking at those wrinkles,

"..... ah-reh, what time did I sleep yesterday?"

Even as he sorted out his memories, he couldn't remember. For some reason, the strange dream he saw just now was jumbled together with his memories.

The embarrassing, fantastical dream which he saw just now that would not even appear in Hollywood movies in this modern age was jumbled together with his memories .

It was a really abnormally embarrassing dream.

A beautiful, promised girl from days of his past said she loved him, and the cute girl in the neighboring class had her hair rippling with electricity, and the popular Mr . Superhero of the school, who excels in sports and studies and has a bad personality, joined forces with him to defeat a monster.

It was a dream. It was a dream that was a little too embarrassing.

"....."

But he felt that it was somehow a pretty fun dream.

At the end, it felt good; the Taito who had not found what he wanted to do in life managed to feel gratified and died with satisfaction.

Now, looking back on it, it seemed like an idiotic dream, he thought,

"..... maybe it's because my desires were unfulfilled after I couldn't do karate anymore."

He murmured and in that instant,

"Ouccchhh."

He groaned as his head was assaulted with pain again.

"Ahh ~, this isn't good. Perhaps, I really caught a cold."

Even as he muttered that, he got out of his bed. And stood up. He looked at the clock hanging from the wall, at the time displayed.

It's ten minutes past eight in the morning.

The morning homeroom would be starting at eight twenty, and if Taito ran from his house which was very near the school, he could still make it.

Well, if he were to run, that is.

"..... yawn ~, somehow, I feel so sleepy. And on top of that, since I slept in my uniform, my body hurts....."

As he said that, he stretched his body. And he ascertained the smell of his uniform to make sure that it didn't reek of any smell of sweat. If it smelled, he would probably change his white shirt, he thought, but,

"Well, seems ok."

And he walked out of his room. He walked down the stairs, into the living room.

"Mom, breakfast ~"

He called out, but there was no response.

"Ah-reh, not in?"

As he entered the living room, he saw a bag of white bread on the table and a note beside it. He read it.

"To the Taito-kun who has started returning home in the morning when he just started high school and is treading down the path of delinquency. Since you appeared to have slept late, I'm not waking you up. I'm going to send Yuika-chan to school. When I get home, I'll make something for you, but if

you can't wait, toast the bread and help yourself. After I get back, I'm going to ask you where you went off to play yesterday. Papa is also very interested, get it?

From Mama"

That was what was written.

By the way, his little sister, Yuika-chan is really smart and is attending the school in the neighboring town. At times, his mother will drive her there. That's why this was not an uncommon thing.

But, Taito looked at that note from his mother,

"..... huh? I got back in the morning? Did I actually come home in the morning?"

And he tried recalling his actions yesterday. If he remembered right, he was sleepy throughout the day, and he rejected Haruka's offer to go back with him, then went back alone. Following that, a truck seemed to be heading towards his classmate from the neighboring class, Andou Mirai, wait, wasn't this part of the dream?

"Ah-reh, then yesterday, how did I....."

But, at that moment, he heard the sound of a car. His mother had come back, and he could hear her parking the car in the garage.

On hearing that, Taito,

"Shit."

Frantically, he took the bread. He held it in his mouth and returned to his room. He looked for his bag. But it wasn't there.

"Duh, why can't I find it?"

As he asked out loud, the sound of the car's engine terminated.

"Ah-ah-, if I let Mom catch hold of me, it will turn into some real bothersome matter. For now, I'd just get out of the house before Dad gets home."

With a frantic pace, he proceeded to dart out of the house. Dashing down the stairs. Opening the front door, darting out of the house, while at the same time, his mother was approaching with a carrier from the convenience store,

"Ah, Tai....."

"Sorry. I'm running late, gotta go. I'm leaving ~"

And he flitted past his mother, breaking into a run.

"Wait up, Taito!"

Even as her voice called out from behind Taito, he ignored it. He continued running. Following that, he slowed down and started strolling.

And in the end, he headed towards school. In the midst of that, he took out his mobile to ascertain the time, but since his mobile wasn't charged, he lost track of the time.

But, whatever the time was, it was certain that he was late.

As he peeked through the small window of the rear door of the classroom, the homeroom had already started .

As their form teacher, Kariya-sensei was saying something to the students, he caught sight of Taito peeking into the classroom and gestured him to enter.

Taito nodded, and tried his best to open the door soundlessly. Even so, all the students naturally turned around to look at him.

A few of them grinned. The two friendly bespectacled guys from yesterday whom he had agreed to play games with, Saitou and Tanaka were also grinning as if to say *late?*, and waved at him.

And in response to that, Taito raised two of his fingers and gestured back.

Somehow, it seemed like the part about making friends with them was not part of the dream. Then, where did the dream start and which parts were real? While tilting his head in bafflement, he headed towards his desk which was by the window. He sat down. And then, from beside him, Haruka took a peek at his face and began,

"Now, it's not good to be late ~. It will be better if I come to get you in the morning, right?"

She said.

On hearing that, Taito looked at her usual gentle face, and then,

"No, yesterday, a lot happened."

He said. Even though at this moment, he couldn't remember what happened though.

Haruka then adopted a worried face and asked.

"Did you go back late yesterday?"

On hearing her query, Taito was indeed perplexed,

"Yeah ~, probably. It seems so."

"Seems so? What happened?"

"Uhn? Ah ~ what happened, huh. I myself don't quite get....."

But, Haruka went on to say. With an earnestly worried face,

"Don't ... don't tell me Taito got into some fight? You said you were going to go save someone though, did you fight....."

But at that moment,

"O~iy, Kurogane, Shigure..... it's fine to act like a couple, but can you please listen to me when I talk ~?"

Sensei said.

And then the students around them started laughing together. Whistling and tsukkomis of *"too traditional"* could be heard.

In response to that, Haruka's face turned red, though for some reason, she looked happy.

However, to Taito, all that didn't matter. A problem more important than that existed, with regards to what Haruka said earlier.

--- to save someone.

He should have said those words in his fantastical dream.

Eh? Could it be that the dream was real?

"That's too moronic."

As Taito said that, Kariya-sensei glared at him through his silver-rimmed glasses and said.

"It's not moronic, you know? It's the truth. She really seems to be the royal bloodline of a kingdom called Pilehne, a small country of Europe that was wiped out from a coup d'état that had taken place a few days ago. Since her father is a Japanese, it seems like she can speak Japanese, but as a result of being raised over there, she's still unfamiliar with how things work here. And because of that, please talk to her normally. She's probably still disorientated in this unfamiliar land. So, do get along well with her."

Their homeroom teacher said something incomprehensible.

On hearing that, Taito,

"Huh? Ugh, what are you talking about?"

As he said that, the students laughed again. And their homeroom teacher, with a troubled expression,

"That's why I asked you to listen when I talk. Do you want to make me start from the beginning again?"

He said.

And then from the side, Haruka said with a soft voice,

"There's a transfer student. This class is short of one person, right? That's why we're getting one more person. That transfer student seemed to be a mixed-race beauty."

In response to those words, Taito looked at Haruka. And said.

"Mixed-race beauty?"

Haruka then adopted a somewhat angry expression,

"Eh ~, the trigger to your reaction is that ~?"

"Huh? Ah ~, no, that's not it though..... it's like, it's like there's a little strange nagging feeling in my heart."

As he said that, he pressed against his own chest. There was really a nagging feeling there.

From the depths of his heart, for some reason, a joyous rousing began, and the feeling was seething upwards.

And then, a throbbing pain arose inside his head, and once again, a voice resounded.

She's coming. She's coming. She's coming, she's coming, she's coming. Your master is coming.

"..... that's why I was saying, what the hell is this?"

As Taito shouted in anger, the students around him turned to look at him. And then, his homeroom teacher,

"No, *what the hell is this?* should be my line, right?"

He asked with an astonished expression.

But, this was no longer the time to answer that.

Because he just saw the unbelievable words that were written on the blackboard.

Because Taito just saw those words that were very familiar to him written on the board.

The following was written on the blackboard. *Name of transfer student* --- was written, and beside that, the following was written.

Saito Himea.[16]

That was what was written.

Taito read that. He read that name.

Saito Himea.

S-a-i-t-o H-i-m-e-a.

Saitohimea.

"....."

In that instant, there was a sharp pain in his chest. And once again, the voice resounded.

She's coming, she's coming, she's coming, coming coming coming coming coming, master is coming. Rejoice. Exult. Your master will soon be by your side.

And at that moment.

Bang, the sound of the sliding door suddenly rang out loudly.

And then, a girl entered the classroom.

The Miyasaka High red pleated-skirt sailor uniform was judged by the students of the neighborhood to be a nice looking uniform that even a girl with fair looks should supposedly look cute in it, but there weren't many girls who look good in it.

No, standing there was a young girl who was so much more beautiful that it would be unreasonable to use the uniform as a benchmark for comparison.

She possesses lavender colored long hair, which was unheard of for a Japanese, no, rather, for a human being for that matter. Flawless white skin. A high, prideful nose, and glossy, beautiful pink lips. A slender body with a good figure.

More than all those things, what was truly eye-catching was her pair of eyes.

Deep crimson eyes. Mischievous looking, shimmering, deep crimson eyes.

Those eyes were scanning the room in curiosity.

As the students looked at her,

"Uw, uwah ~, what's that?"

"Beauty."

"A human?"

Words such as these.

And then from the homeroom teacher,

"Ahh, you've come at last. From today onwards, she will be your classmate. Her name is Saito....."

But, at that moment, Himea's eyes fell on Taito. With the same face as the one in his dream.

No, it was the same face as the one in his memory that was looking at him and smiling. She looked at him with a beaming face,

"Taito!?"

She shouted.

And all of a sudden, she jumped. Stepping onto the very front seat, and using it as a platform, she jumped. And then kicked off the next desk belonging to Saitou, and further jumped again.

Everyone was taken aback.

But, she was unconcerned.

As usual, she didn't care.

She merely looked straight ahead at him.

And then.

"I've been wanting to see you!!"

She shouted. Following that, she embraced Taito, toppling Taito's chair as a result.

But, as expected, she was unconcerned.

She clung onto Taito's chest tightly, tightly, tightly.

"I've been wanting to see you. I've been wanting to see you."

She murmured.

In response to that,

"Ugh, e~rm, ah ~, is that so..... yesterday wasn't a dream..... which means everything was real, and the things I did yesterday....."

But, at that moment.

ナイトメア

Haruka came into Taito's sight. Looking at her face that seemed to have received a wave of shock, Taito frantically,

"Ah, erm, this is not what it seems, Haruka..... this, erm, wait!! Hi, Himea!? Can you, can you release....."

Taito was at a total loss.

Gradually, a commotion started among the students. Somehow, he could feel that the situation was turning for the worse dangerously.

Well, he could understand the guys. But, as for the gals,

"That fella already has Haruka, but yet blah blah blah."

"Hey, he's the worst. What's with that fella bleh bleh bleh."

At the last was Haruka,

"What, what's the meaning of this? Taito. An acquaintance?"

For some reason, she was asking in a teary voice.

Uwah, he thought.

Uwah, this seems really bad ~, he thought.

But, at that moment.

"Is Taito here -!?"

Another familiar voice rang out from the entrance to the classroom.

And everyone turned around to look in the direction of that voice.

As Taito looked too, standing there was that child.

The child who was said to be the cutest from the neighboring class.

As Andou Mirai saw him,

"Woah - awesome! You really came back to life!? Well done!"

She said.

And then the girls,

"That one too."

"Could, could it be three-timing?"

And then, once again, Haruka,

"Ta, TaTaTa, Taito?"

As I was saying, that's not it.

You guys are getting it wron.....

But, at that moment, Himea said. While touching Taito's neck happily,

"I love you, Taito."

On hearing those words,

"....."

Taito looked at Haruka.

But, in a flustered manner,

"I, I, I need to go to the ladies."

On saying that, she dashed out with tears flowing.

"Wrongggggggggggggggggg!?"

Taito yelled, but it was too late. Several girls,

"Are you ok? Haruka!"

They proceeded to chase after her, but before leaving the classroom,

"Kurogane-kun, you're the worst!"

They said.

On top of that, the other girls also glared at him. Furthermore, as the boys who have proclaimed themselves to be fans of Mirai glared at him, Mirai approached him. And then she gave a few taps to Taito's body in a familiar fashion and touched his head,

"Woah awesome, you really came back to life."

She said.

No, this is really a misunderstanding,

"....."

The atmosphere was such that it was no longer possible to explain further.

His homeroom teacher said. While glowering at them,

"Alright, Kurogane. You don't need to attend the first period. Follow me to the teachers' office to explain a few things to me, would you?"

On hearing those words, Taito looked at his homeroom teacher,

"..... ah ~, hahh ~, erm..... right....."

He sighed out.

But at that moment. A much more troublesome fellow appeared.

At the door from which Mirai came in to the classroom . He saw a man with jet black hair, in a stand-up collar uniform, and bearing cold eyes.

And then that man said.

"No, Sensei. I'll take this guy. From today onwards, he's a slave of the student council and I'll be taking him along, and because of that, the school rules will no longer apply to him."

He said.

The former teacher looked at the entrance with a surprised expression. He looked at that impertinent superhero of the school, Kurenai Gekkou.

"Ah, so he's the comrade of Kurenai-kun?"

"Wrong. He's my slave."

"Then, I'm reassured."

"Duh, how's that so?"

Taito tried retorting, though regrettably, at the moment this fellow stepped onto the stage, the entire situation had changed.

A while ago, the same girls who were calling him the worst and telling him *die bastard!* with their expressions,

"So, so Kurogane-kun is Gekkou-sama's comrade. That's awesome."

"So to speak, looking again carefully, Kurogane-kun's pretty cool."

"Haruka has good eyes, right."

Are you girls morons? Are you morons?, Taito thought of making a comeback, but before he could do that, Gekkou said.

"Now, Himea, Mirai, Taito, stop tarrying around. There's work to be done."

"Wait, why is my last name dropped as well!"

On hearing Taito's words, Gekkou looked down at him,

"Shut up, slave."

"Who's a slave!"

"You. However you look at it, you're a servile slave, right? Or what? If I don't teach your body some lessons, you can't swallow this outcome?"

As Gekkou lightly raised his fist, Taito got up.

"Aahh, suits me fine, we haven't decided the outcome from yesterday..... from yesterday..... uhm, Himea. Can you let go of me already?"

"Nope."

"No, I mean..... ahh, anyway, I have no intention of following your....."

But, even that was interrupted.

Dogon (sfx), a sound rang out, and the school shook.

What's happening?, the homeroom teacher yelled, and the students also went *kyaaaaa*, and started dashing out.

As expected, only Gekkou who, with his calm and cold eyes, looked in the upward direction of the school premises.

He looked up in the direction of the student council room on the fifth floor,

"..... hm. Let's put off that match. Right now, lend me a hand."

On hearing those words, Taito said.

"No way."

"No way?"

"No way."

"Hm. Well, fine..... if we fail at this job, the world will be destroyed, you know?"

"Eh?"

"Well, when you feel like helping, come. Mirai, let's go. "

"Uhn!"

"No no. Wait a minute. The world? What's with that humongous extent? Hey, Gekkou? Kurenai-kun?"

But, Gekkou never looked back and continued moving forward.

And Taito could only look at his disappearing figure in a dumbfounded manner.

"....."

Without saying anything for a while, he looked at his disappearing figure,

"..... aaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh geez, aaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhh geez, what's wrong with that guy! He's terribly, terribly irritating!"

As he said that, he started walking. He walked past the quiet students and sensei, out of the classroom.

And, being dragged alongside, Himea followed as well.

"Ugh, as I was saying, Himea, you should get off me already."

"Hahhahha ~"

"No, this is not the time to 'hahhahha'."

"Let's go, Taito. We shall stop the world from getting destroyed."

"Wait, what kind of character is that?"

"Who cares? But, it's really fun. It's really fun to be with Taito. It's really fun to talk to people."

She smiled merrily and Taito looked at her.

And then he thought.

Since she had probably not smiled a single time during those nine years, during which she must have gone through a lot of painful memories, he would ignore the trivial stuff if she could continue to smile like that, he thought.

Even though a lot of things he couldn't accept had happened, he decided not to be too bothered about them for now.

Of course, he couldn't let what happened with Haruka go, but well.

"..... for now, let's also go to the student council room."

After saying that, once again, they started walking along the corridor.

And then, this began.

My story began.

Our troublesome, shitty story in which the worlds are interconnected began.

This very day, on which the twelfth generation **"Kurenai Gekkou . Student Council Room"** was truly formed ---

The entire story began.

♦
♦
♦

♦

And the location shifted.

It shifted a little.

Even if it was described as only a little, it was in fact at a dimensional warp of a place distinctively separated from the current world.

"So? Has she awakened?"

"Yes."

"Is everything going as planned?"

"Yes."

"Hmm. And did she use any of the **<< Six Desires of Tenma >>** (Maara Hapiyasu) that she had stolen from me?"

"No, not yet..... the only thing she had used was Martes Devil." (Tenma)

"Martes Devil? The flames of that good-for-nothing Marten?" (Tenma) (Itachi)

"Yes."

"Haha. I see. She still has..... she still has a trace of sensibility left in her? Even for that slutty, mad, calamitously evil being who would turn everything into oblivion,

<< Most Ancient Witch >> **Ramiel Lilith**[17] Saitohimea..... but, the only thing we must never allow is the completion of the secret art --- **<< Bliss >>**, by that witch."

"Yes."

"It's for that you were born. Rem....."

"I understand."

"Is that so. Uhn. You are really an obedient, good kid. Well then, I'm leaving. Continue your surveillance."

"Yes."

"May **<< Bliss >>** be upon you."

"May **<< Bliss >>** be upon you ---"

After saying that, she turned on her heel.

Facing away from her master, her carefully formed, expressionless face contorted a little.

With sadness. As if she were about to cry.

And softly, she murmured.

"....."

Softly. Softly. In order not to let anyone hear her. Including her master, including her own self, in an inaudible voice,

"..... this is unbearable, Taito."

That was.

What Shigure Haruka murmured.

Afterword

As a promotional statement, to start off, this work is a school reverse fantasy, it seems.

In other words, it's set in the school. Even though I didn't really write it with a conscious attempt to fit a particular genre, this was how it turned out this time.

Ah, oh yeah, since this is a new work, I need to introduce myself right!

Erm, pleased to meet you for the first time. I'm Kagami Takaya. It's been a while since I seriously wrote "pleased to meet you for the first time", as in it's been seven years since I have a totally new work, pleased to meet you for the first time, I'm Kagami Takaya.

How's my new work **"Itsuka Tenma no Kuro Usagi 1"** ?

For me, I'm trembling.

To speak of the reason for why I'm trembling, when Fujimi Shobou-sama was marketing this new work, they were using advertisements that said, "It's a new work by that Kagami Takaya after 7 years!", and "Kagami

Takaya's great explosion!", which must have cost a bomb in advertisement fees, and if I fail, my head will roll. In the worst case, it's also possible that they might put me out to dry. It's true. If I don't appear in a certain daily publication, please assume that Kagami Takaya must have received the punishment dealt in anger by Immortal Shobou[18]. By the way, *if that "Kagami Takaya's great explosion!" ad doesn't sell, we shall strap a C4 bomb onto you and explode you -- BY Fujimi Shobou*; I don't doubt that such an ad will be made in place of wellll, let's leave the idiotic jokes aside.

Regarding the work.

I managed to enjoy writing it.

I'll be really happy if everyone can continue giving me support and allow me to continue enjoying writing this. And for this work, it would be nice if I can receive the same amount of support as my current ongoing series " Densetsu Yuusha no Densetsu" (Denyuuden), I think.

At any rate, this work also has a pretty large concept behind it, and it would be nice if it can sell to the point where I can properly depict it ~.[19]

Of course, I guess the editorial department will be thinking along the line of *Make sure it sells like "Denyuuden"!*, but even to the author, that title has become suprisingly monstrous, so let's put that aside and steadily raise "Itsuten", I guess.[20]

No, I think it should be able to sell (LOL).

But I really hope that this story created around Taito, Himea, Gekkou, Mirai, and Haruka will be well received and loved by everyone in the same way as "Denyuuden".

Everyone, please cheer me on! And to those who have gotten hold of the book and have read until here, thank you!

And this means ~.

Now to report on my recent situation.

Even when I say that, currently, "Itsuka Tenma no Kuro Usagi" and "Densetsu Yuusha no Densetsu" will be published in succession in the next six months! That's why I'm so busy working to death to meet my schedule that I don't have any recent situation so as to speak. This is bad, real badddddddddddddddddddddddddddd,

but erm, if I continue like this until this book is launched, and say that I might not be able to make it for the successive six-months publishing dates, then Fujimi Shobou will again, Fujimi Shoubooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!?

Really, those guys are strict (LOL).

In truth, to tell everyone, the editor from Fujimi is really kind. As to how kind Fujimi Shobou is, I'll let you guys catch a glimpse of the conversation between me and my in-charge bishoujo editor K-ya-san[21]

"Kagami-san."

"Yes."

"At last, your new work is about to launch."

"Yeah."

"What what what, what should we do? If it doesn't sell , I'll definitely be asked to take responsibility, I'll definitely be asked to take responsibility ~!? My heart is on the verge of exploding."

"Eh!? Even K-ya-san has a C4 bomb strapped to the heart!?"

"That's right! The president of Immortal Shoubo seems to have the Sta*d power[22] of attaching a C4 bomb onto the editorial department..... ah, my heart!?"

"K-ya-sannnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn!? Damn, damn president! Damn presidentttttttttttt!?"

Such a conversation, of course didn't take place. Even though K-ya-san and I do have our hearts banging wildly , and the editorial department do tremble, but that's not due to any Stan* power. Then again, is it ok for me to write about St*nd powers? Is it really ok? Well, let's leave it.

Erm, this and that ~.

Six month publishing in succession, I'm doing it! Starting from this Novemeber, December will be Ochita Kuroi Yuusha no Densetsu 3, January will be Itsuka Tenma no Kuro Usagi 2, February will be Dai Densetsu no Yuusha no Densetsu 5, March will be Itsuka Tenma no Kuro Usagi 3, April will be Ochita Kuroi Yuusha no Densetsu 4.

Something like that. Hahhahha. Uhn. So as to speak, I'm going to die!

But if everyone is pleased by this, it's possible to do my best!

But, I guess there probably will be various 'fanfare' surrounding this six month consecutive releases, so please read about it in the Dragon Magazine that is going to be sold on the day as the launch date of this book.

In addition, the cover of Doramaga[23] is "Itsuten"!

A special write-up and drama CD for Denyuuden comes along with it, as well as short stories for "Itsuten" and "Denyuuden" which in total consist of about 150 pages of manuscript. There will definitely be no next time for such a thing again, which is effectively turning into a grand Kagami Takaya C4 bombing fest, so do please pick it up and read it; that'll make me real happy.

So as to speak, I shall end here.

The next time we meet will be in the afterword of next month right! As for "Itsuten", it'd be in book 2 in the following month!

Well well, it's fast but until next time ~.

Kagami Takaya

Kagami Takaya official homepage: http://www.kagamitakaya.com/

Translator's Notes and References

1. ↑ **Tenma:** Tenma (天) means demon; evil spirit; evil deity. However, in this story, it has a special meaning which will be revealed later on. Thus this word will not be translated.

2. ↑ Black Magic / **Poison : The kanji is given as 毒 (ie. Poison)**, the furigana is given as **ま**, which I currently translated it as **"Black Magic"** to suit the word **"Poison"**. Depending on circumstances, I might change it to **" Magic"** or **"Sorcery"** in the future since all these are valid translations. Furigana (text above) is used for reading, which means one should read it as **"Black Magic"** when reading the text. The kanji + okurigana (lower text) gives either (1) the real meaning or true nature, (2) alternative meaning (thus implying the word has multiple meanings), or (3) an alternate reading (ie. equivalent meaning).

3. ↑ **Taito(大):** Taito's name in kanji literally means **" Large Rabbit"**. This is a somewhat important and interesting point which will help the reader to catch certain references later in the story. For information,

part of the title, **"Usagi"** means rabbit.

4. ↑ **Matsuri Sewing:** A kind of stitch that hides the thread from the surface. If someone knows what the English name is, let me know ^w^

5. ↑ **Mirai(美):** Mirai has the same sound as the word ' future', but the kanji is written as **"美"**, the first character means 'beautiful/pretty', the second character means 'thunder' which can be synonymous to 'lightning' in Japanese, especially in conjugated words. This will be an interesting note later.

6. ↑ **Most Ancient Sorcerers (Vampires):** The kanji is given as **最**, which I currently translated it as **"Most Ancient Sorcerer"**, while the furigana (in katakana) is given as **ヴ (ie. Vampire)**. Depending on circumstances, I might change **"Most Ancient Sorcerer"** to **"Most Ancient Mage"** or **"Most Ancient Magician"** in the future since all these are valid translations. Furigana (text above) is used for reading, which means one should read it as **"Vampire"** when reading the text. The kanji + okurigana (lower text) gives either (1) the real meaning or true nature, (2) alternative

meaning (thus implying the word has multiple meanings), or (3) an alternate reading (ie. equivalent meaning).

7. ↑ **Rai(雷):** While the word is read as 'powers'(chikara), the kanji used is Rai(雷), which is translated to thunder. However for Japanese, and Chinese as well, there are many times when thunder is used to represent the 'lightning' element (especially for conjugating words, though it's not restricted to that, eg. Raijin, Raijyuu, Raikage), despite the fact that it's a 'sound' component. Just a note of interest: the word for lightning is Inazuma().

8. ↑ **Wicked Blade:** The kanji is given as 凶, which I chose to translate it as **"Wicked Blade"**, while the furigana (in katakana) is given as ス **(ie. Spell Error)**. Furigana (text above) is used for reading, which means one should read it as **"Spell Error"** when reading the text. The kanji + okurigana (lower text) gives either (1) the real meaning or true nature, (2) alternative meaning (thus implying the word has multiple meanings), or (3) an alternate reading (ie. equivalent meaning).

9. ↑ **Andu of Indra (イ):** Currently Andu is unidentified. Indra is the equivalent of Zeus in the Hindu mythology. The kanji is written as "Thunder" with furigana(reading) as Indra.

10. ↑ **Demon Lord of Thunder (Indra):** Remember this is a work of fiction, and I'm merely translating from the text with the best effort in preserving the word usage of the author. No offense meant to any religion.

11. ↑ **Sukebeda Erogorou:** Mirai uses sukebe and ero and parts of common family and given names, da, and gorou, and merged them together to form Sukebeda Erogorou.

12. ↑ **Yesterday:** Hope no one is taking this literally, since it'd be contradictory otherwise. I've made this to a figurative form of speech since this is quite impossible to translate to an English equivalent to retain the Japanese flow and literature style Kagami intended."

13. ↑ **Martes Plane / Tenkai (貂):** 貂 (Ten) very likely refers to the Japanese Marten, and 界 (Kai) means

world. Since we are talking about alternate dimensions, plane is a better word. Additionally, I chose to use the genus name "Martes" rather than Marten to represent the writing, since it's more cool.

14. ↑ **Martes Tenma Devil :** The kanji written here is 貂, pronounced as Tenma. as explained in the previous note, very likely refers to the Japanese Marten, while adds a demonic / devilish / spirit connotation. This is obviously a fictitious being, and despite the word used, it does not necessarily mean that it's evil. Thus , the word is translated as Martes Devil and the reading Tenma is preserved. However, this should not be confused with (Tenma), which appears in the titles of the prologue and epilogue in this volume (as well as the title of the series) and first mentioned in the note of the prologue chapter, the writing of which will not be translated. is a completely different existence which will be introduced at the end of volume 2.

15. ↑ **Gouka (劫) :** Gouka is a Buddhist term for a unique conflagration (or to put it simply, fire) that is used to destroy the world by burning everything into nothingness. Using such a term indicates how

destructive the flames of **Martes Devil** (Tenma) are. For those who watch or read Naruto, they are a little like Amaterasu.

16. ↑ **Saito Himea:** As indicated in a previous note, the non-Japanese name of Saitohimea is a single word written in katakana, サ. At this juncture however, it is split up to form a Japanese name and rewritten in the following manner, (Saito Himea).

17. ↑ **Ramiel Lilith:** Apparently these are names borrowed from real world mythologies. Though other than that, there does not seem to be any other resemblance in particular. See here for Ramiel and here for Lilith.

18. ↑ **Imortal Shobou:** This is a pun regarding Fujimi Shobou (富), the publisher of Kagami's works. Since (Fujimi) has the same pronunciation as (fujimi), which means immortal.

19. ↑ **Random TL note on Kagami's musing 1:** Hard to render this in English, but Kagami is saying that, just like Denyuuden, this work is going to be epic, and he hopes to make this series long enough so that he can properly manifest the concepts and ideas he

has into the story, and this is only possible if you readers support him by buying the novels.

20. ↑ **Random TL note on Kagami's musing 2:** This is again hard to render. From my understanding, what Kagami meant is that despite what the editorial department thought, Denyuuden has been running for quite some time and has quite a number of volumes, thus able to reek in high volume of sales, and he will take it a step at a time and build Itsuten up.

21. ↑ **Editor in charge of Itsuten:** This is really nothing important, but if anyone is interested, it's an open secret that her name is Catherine, based on the tweets.

22. ↑ **Stands:** A Stand is a spiritual-like supernatural power in JoJo's Bizarre Adventure.

23. ↑ **Doramaga:** Short for Dragon Magazine